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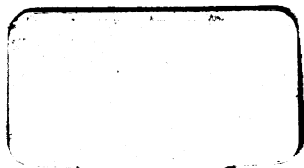
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THE COMPLAINING MILLIONS OF MEN



KD 439



THE
COMPLAINING MILLIONS OF MEN

A Novel

BY
EDWARD FULLER

*"The complaining millions of men
Darken in labour and pain"*

—MATTHEW ARNOLD



NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
1893

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TO

EDWIN MUNROE BACON

**WITH THE SINCERE REGARDS OF ONE OF HIS MANY PUPILS
IN THE PROFESSION OF JOURNALISM, WHICH HE HAS
DONE SO MUCH TO MAKE HONOURABLE**

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THE COMPLAINING MILLIONS OF MEN

CHAPTER I

FRANCIS BARETTA

"You must come to me on Thursday ; there are so many people I want you to meet."

"Thank you, Mrs. Chilton," said the young man, flushing slightly. "I shall be very grateful for the privilege."

"Oh, don't take it too seriously." Mrs. Chilton gazed anxiously down the street—a rather dingy thoroughfare, choked with traffic. "Isn't that my car coming—a yellow one?"

"There seems to be a blockade—a big cart is standing across the track."

"I believe Charles Street is just the very worst street in Boston. I can't remember getting a Belt Line car without having to wait and wait. That is the trouble with living at the South End. Oh, of course you know my number, Mr. Baretta—37 Pembroke Square. Do you think you can find it?"

"Yes, thank you; I am beginning to know Boston well in these days—some parts of it, I dare say, that few Bostonians know."

"Ah, your work—all my friends will be anxious to know about that."

"It isn't among them"—began the young man, with a frown which made his dark face more forbidding than it was by nature. But Mrs. Chilton interrupted him.

"Now don't say anything rude. Wait until Thursday—then you may be as rude as you like. They will like you the better for it. Well, there is my car at last." Mrs. Chilton turned a

cheerful face, with some reminiscences of rouge and powder about the eyes, towards her companion, and put out her hand in token of farewell. "Thursday—37 Pembroke Square."

Baretta lifted his hat, then waved to the driver of the approaching conveyance to pull up his horses. "At what time?" he asked, as the car came to a stop.

Mrs. Chilton turned on the step and looked back at him. "Oh, any time after four," she said, with a look and tone which expressed surprise.

Baretta lifted his hat a second time, and fell back to the curb with a conviction that somehow he had made a mistake, and that Mrs. Chilton would have snubbed him if she had had a better opportunity. He was always making mistakes when he was talking with people of her sort, who placed a higher value, it seemed to him, upon the accessories of human intercourse than upon the essentials. He could never get used to picking and choosing his words—to thinking whether what he did was the right thing or not. There were more important matters to consider than these. It will be seen that this young man had but a slight acquaintance with that order of society in which certain observances come by instinct and are taken for granted. He thought that good-breeding had to be acquired, like Latin, by a painful mental process. Consequently he experienced some qualms at the prospect of appearing at Mrs. Chilton's on Thursday. Mrs. Chilton held no formal receptions, but she was always at home to her friends on that day. She was a woman who liked to see people; and she enjoyed the desultory and harmless gossip that diffused itself around her with each fresh arrival. She had won no inconsiderable reputation in literature. She wrote bad stories and good poems. Youth and beauty were long ago things of the past—Baretta had observed the traces of rouge and powder as he talked with her—but she was still fond of both, and usually managed to gratify her fondness. She understood perfectly how to be agreeable to those who were inexperienced enough to be just a little awed by her eminence. There was always a pretty girl or two at these informal gatherings to pour tea, and young men who were trying to make their way on the newspapers and magazines invariably received from

the darkness of the waters in which he had struggled. Well, he had at least proved his right to live; and there were great things in the future for him—of that he felt confident. On Thursday afternoon he might take the first step towards achieving some of them.

Another young man coming down the steps of that courtly stone mansion which is now the Bowdoin Club, stopped as he saw Baretta approaching and held out his hand.

"How are you?" he asked, cordially. "Where have you been keeping yourself for the past two months?"

Instead of answering this question, Baretta stared first at the speaker and then at the house from which he had come. "Do you belong to the Bowdoin?" was what he said at last.

Baretta's manner was abrupt, and the other young man flushed suddenly as if he felt that it was also offensive. "No, I don't," he answered shortly. "Do you?"

"Me!" cried Baretta. He had done much to educate himself, but there were times when he lapsed from the correct use of his mother-tongue. "Don't be absurd, Yates." He paused a moment, and then he added, with an assumption of carelessness which was not quite free from embarrassment, "Of course, I didn't mean to offend you."

"Offend me!" repeated Yates, with a laugh. "My dear fellow, it's a great thing to belong to the Bowdoin. But as for myself, I sometimes wonder that they let me into the Pilgrim."

"I dare say there are differences which it takes you swells to comprehend."

"See here, Baretta!" Yates had turned to walk up the street with his companion, but as he spoke he stopped suddenly and faced him. "I wish you'd drop that nonsensical talk. Rave against capital all you like, but for Heaven's sake respect the boundaries between Society and Bohemia, and remember that I live in Bohemia."

"I will remember," said Baretta. He had apparently taken the rebuke in good part, but there was a sudden gleam of anger in his eyes. "Perhaps," he added, presently, "you will see me in Bohemia before very long."

"Oh, so you are going on an exploring expedition in the enemy's country before you destroy it."

"It is you who are talking nonsense this time, Yates," said Baretta, calmly. "But you are like all the rest. That is why when Socialism wins it must be destructive rather than constructive. The partisans of the established order misrepresent its aims so completely, and oppose them so bitterly, that it has no choice between surrender and war to the death. And the Socialists will never surrender."

"I suppose that you have talked that sort of stuff so long you really believe it."

"Stuff! Oh, well, they called the talk about popular rights stuff once. And then came the French Revolution."

"The French Revolution! That's the final, convincing argument. I never knew you fellows to fail to bring it out. But it isn't half so efficacious a threat as you think. We've had Anarchists and bomb-throwers and Johann Most since then, and we've found out what arrant cowards the whole gang are. No, Baretta, don't talk about the French Revolution. Threaten us with Nationalist clubs—that will be worse."

"There is no use in discussing the subject with you," retorted Baretta. "And I don't want to lose my temper."

Yates laughed again. He was a tall, fair young man, with keen blue eyes and a sweeping blond mustache. "Well, let us agree that I am unsympathetic and stupid, and tell me about this excursion into Bohemia."

"Oh, that!" said Baretta, contemptuously. "It is nothing worth talking about."

"That must be the reason that it interests me," Yates declared. The two young men had now reached the corner of Park Street, and Yates turned to go down the hill towards Tremont Street. "Come over to my rooms, Baretta, and let me hear the whole story."

"I haven't any story to tell."

"That's what Canning's knife-grinder said, but I am not philanthropist enough to kick over your wheel."

Baretta laughed, although he did not understand the allusion in the least. But he made it a rule never to confess ignorance

of anything. He had educated himself, and he did not like to admit that there were any imperfections in the work. "Oh, well, I will come with you," he said, "but I can tell you in a word what I mean. I am going to Mrs. Chilton's on Thursday."

"Mrs. Chilton? She writes that gush in the *Trumpet*, doesn't she?"

Baretta looked at Yates in astonishment. This was worse than not knowing who Canning's knife-grinder was. "Do you mean to say, Yates, that you have never read Mrs. Chilton's stories—or her poems?"

"Dreadful, isn't it?" said Yates, smiling. "But there's so much that I haven't read. Look out! there's an electric coming. I hate those cursed things; I know I shall be run over by one of them some day."

Yates's rooms were in Livingstone Place. To reach them one entered a narrow hallway and climbed three flights of steep stairs. "I think it's rather pleasant when you get here," Yates said, as he threw open the door and waited for his companion to enter.

"Very pleasant indeed," assented Baretta, looking about him. It was a large square apartment into which he was ushered, with two windows looking upon the Place, and two upon Tremont Street. The furnishings were comfortable rather than luxurious. A big desk, strewn with books and papers, occupied the centre of the room. There were well-filled bookcases all around the walls; photographs, framed and unframed; a few busts, one or two good paintings, an ebony cabinet in one corner with a display of china; crossed foils and gloves above the mantel, and near the fireplace a morris-chair, drawn close to a small table with a lamp upon it. There was a doorway curtained with a Turcoman portière which led to the bedroom beyond. Baretta, with a feeling of bitterness, which showed itself in the corners of his mouth, thought of his own stuffy little chamber in a squalid part of the city, and wondered what Yates would say if he should invite him to visit it.

"No, Mrs. Chilton's fame has only reached me through the *Trumpet*," said Yates. "But if she is a friend of yours I shall have to make her further acquaintance—in print. Sit down,

Baretta, and make yourself comfortable. You'll find some cigarettes on the desk." He went to the cabinet and paused with his hand on the door. "Will you have maraschino or curaçoa?"

"Neither—I don't drink."

"Nor smoke?"

"No; I can't afford to do either." Baretta spoke aggressively, as if he expected to be disputed. But Yates merely shrugged his shoulders, and came away from the cabinet without opening it.

"What a lot of books you have," said Baretta, after a moment of silence, seeing that the other intended to make no reply to his last observation. "I envy you those."

"I don't know how they have accumulated so rapidly. A good many of them are not of much account. That set of British Poets is rather a good one, and there's a second edition of Dodsley in half calf that I picked up at a bargain. Are you interested in old plays? Here is a remarkably fine set of Bell's Theatre that I had bound up with some extra plates."

Baretta looked vaguely at the backs of the volumes indicated and shook his head. "My reading hasn't been much in that line—although, of course, I've dipped into them; oh yes, I've dipped into them. But I've had too much else to do and to think of. I must make all my reading serve one purpose."

"Ah, it's a great thing to be so terribly in earnest. How is it you've found time for Mrs. Chilton's poetry?"

"Well, don't you know," replied Baretta, in an embarrassed sort of fashion, "I hunted it up and read it after I had met her."

Yates laughed. "I see you're guilty of these little bits of social finesse like the rest of us. And so you are going to roar for her on Thursday."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Don't take offence—it's a compliment, I assure you. Mrs. Chilton is fond of lions—I know that much about her—and you are to be the latest exhibition."

"If I thought she asked me merely to be stared at by a gaping crowd—"

"Oh, you misunderstand me. It's an honour. Boston society—all but the very best—is chiefly devoted to the pleasures of the chase, and noble game is essential."

"Well," said Baretta, rather irritably, "I confess that I don't understand you. It's absurd to suppose that Mrs. Chilton invited me because she fancied I had any pretensions to eminence."

"Far be from me, Baretta, to destroy your guileless confidence, but I should like some time to give you a little lecture upon Boston and the Bostonians, and how to succeed among them."

"Success of the sort you mean is what I do not want." The young man took a few turns up and down the room, his brows meeting in a thoughtful frown, and a strange light flashing from his eyes. "You would laugh at me if I should confide to you my real ambition. You would call me a dreamer and an enthusiast—no, you would call me a fool. But I should like to have you think that I am sincere."

"My dear fellow!" cried Yates, in a tone of remonstrance.

"I suppose you have heard of Matthew Arnold," Baretta went on, still walking up and down. "I don't mean to be sarcastic; I dare say you have read his books, which is more than I have done. But I once came across a poem of his—I've forgotten what it was all about now—only two lines seemed to burn themselves into my memory—they seemed to tell me all at once what my life work was to be. They must be familiar to you:

" 'The complaining millions of men
Darken in labour and pain.'

That's all—but what a picture of human life it gives! Well, Yates, it's to the complaining millions that I have dedicated my poor powers. When I come to die I want to feel that I have done my best to wipe out that monstrous injustice which men call law, or government, or society—it's just as bad by any name."

"I see, I see," murmured Yates, as Baretta paused and looked at him. "But I think you are going to work the wrong way."

"The right way is not palter and compromise, at all events," declared the other, vehemently. "That has been tried a good many years, and it has never led to anything but failure."

"Ah, yes; but can the labour and pain be abolished even if you tear down the whole social structure? That's the point."

"One can do no more than try."

"And when you are sitting in the ruins, how do you propose to rebuild?"

"Oh, one needn't cross a bridge before one comes to it."

"You are like all the rest," said Yates. "It is impossible to pin you down to anything definite. You ask us to close our eyes and swallow the medicine you give us without a grimace. But come, you haven't told me about Mrs. Chilton yet."

Baretta threw himself into a chair with an air of relaxation which was in striking contrast to his former mood of passionate intensity. "You bring me down to the solid ground again with a vengeance," he said. "As to Mrs. Chilton, there's really nothing to tell except that I have met her two or three times at the house of some people who have been very kind to me, the Lawrences—"

"The Lawrences!" cried Yates.

"Oh, do you know them? I never heard them speak of you. Well, and so when Mrs. Chilton met me on the street this afternoon she asked me to come on Thursday."

"No—it is probably some one else that I am thinking of," Yates said, in a curiously constrained manner, ignoring the explanation about Mrs. Chilton for which he himself had asked. "The name has unpleasant associations for me, that is all. And Mrs. Chilton—she is as charming as her poetry, I dare say."

"I thought you had not read her poetry," said Baretta, staring at him.

"My dear fellow," answered Yates, gayly, "I take your word for it. And I am really beginning to envy you your opportunities."

A peculiar smile appeared on Baretta's face. "What would you say, I wonder, if you could see Miss Mildred Lawrence?"

The book which Yates had taken up fell to the desk with a bang.

"You do know them?" cried Baretta, rising from his chair.

"How careless of me!" said Yates, with an air of vexation. He looked up, and the eyes of the young men met. "Oh, I beg your pardon," he added; "I was thinking of something else. No, Miss Mildred Lawrence—is that the name?—is an entire stranger to me."

CHAPTER II

ARRAGON STREET

BARETTA felt certain that Yates must at some time have known Mildred Lawrence, in spite of his denial; and when he came away from his friend's rooms he was still wondering what the connection between them might have been. That it was a disagreeable recollection there could be no manner of doubt. Miss Lawrence herself must have had some motive for reticence, because he was sure that he had more than once mentioned Yates's name in her presence, and she had certainly given no indication of recognizing it. Baretta vaguely determined that if there were any mystery here he would get to the bottom of it. He was rather fond of mysteries; he made his own career one, although the main facts of it were tolerably simple.

It was when he was about twelve years old that he had taken his resolution to cut loose from the disagreeable associations among which he had been brought up. With a keenness of perception beyond his years he had realized the fact that a drunken father was an incumbrance, and that he must get on in the world by his own efforts. At this time the elder Baretta was enjoying a sober interval, and was working at his trade in Portsmouth. He was not a bad parent, according to his lights; he always treated the boy kindly, and when he had any money bestowed dimes and nickels upon him with great generosity. Francis hoarded these gifts, and managed to add to the sum by carrying parcels for a chemist in the place and by holding the horses of men who resorted to the hotel for a cocktail or a whiskey-and-soda. When he had accumulated five dollars he bought a ticket for Boston, and thus disappeared from the New

Hampshire town forever. It was a hazardous undertaking, but the boy's confidence in himself was justified by events. On the very morning of his arrival he was attracted by a placard in the window of a clothing-shop, which announced that extra salesmen were wanted. He entered and applied for a position. The man to whom he was directed looked at him and laughed.

"I guess you're hardly big enough, sonny," he said.

Francis drew himself up with an air of importance. "I may not be very big," he observed, "but I know a thing or two."

The man laughed again, more loudly than before. "You've got cheek, at any rate. Where do you come from?"

"From Springfield," answered the boy. "My father's dead, and the folks I was with didn't treat me right, and so I ran away."

This falsehood ran so glibly from his tongue that the head clerk accepted it as truth. "How old are you?" he asked.

"Sixteen," said Francis.

"You're pretty small for your age."

"Well, perhaps I'll grow."

"Have you any references?"

The demand puzzled him for a moment. This was a contingency for which he had not provided. But he quickly came to the conclusion that if he got on at all it must be by sheer audacity and nothing else. "I can write to Springfield," he said, confidently, "but I don't want to. They might make me go back."

"Have they any legal claim upon you?" asked the clerk.

"I—I don't know exactly what you mean. They ain't no relations."

The man looked at him a moment with a contemplative air. "It's against the rules to hire a boy without references," he said at last; "but I like you, young feller, and as one of our boys has been taken sick, I am going to give you his place until he comes back. Be here to-morrow morning at eight o'clock sharp."

In this extraordinary fashion Francis began his career of independence. After having got his start by misrepresentation, he resolved to be faithful to his employers, and he kept his reso-

lution. His early experiences had not been calculated to develop in him the finer virtues; but he had no innate love of evil, and so long as it was not necessary to his advancement he could be scrupulously honest. He never acquired any of those vices which most boys thrown upon the world at his age acquire. He did not swear, or use vile language, or smoke cigarettes, or gamble. He was prompt and energetic and courteous, although his flashing eyes betrayed a hot temper, and he resented rough pranks with a virulence of passion which rather frightened those who played them. In fact, he mingled little with boys of his class. He disliked them because he felt himself to be their superior, and they disliked him because they recognized and resented this assumption of superiority. Consequently he made no friends, and was thrown entirely upon his own resources; which, perhaps, was just as well. His lonely life enabled him to become acquainted with books and to save money. He remained at the clothing-shop two years. Then he went to a huge dry-goods establishment, beginning with the humble occupation of tying up parcels. In two years more—when he was in fact sixteen, the age which he had assumed at the outset of his business career—he was promoted to a place behind the counter. He might fairly by this time be called a young man, so few boyish traits were left to him. His popularity among his fellows had not increased meanwhile. He held himself aloof from them, and instead of going to the theatre or lounging about bar-rooms spent his evenings in the public library. Thus several years more passed in an uneventful fashion. When he was twenty he fell in with the man whose influence chiefly helped to determine his future career.

Baretta had told Yates that the inspiration for the work he was now doing came from two lines of Matthew Arnold's which he had quoted. This was, perhaps, in some measure true; they may have stimulated in him an imminent desire to identify himself with the complaining millions. He felt that he, too, had some cause for complaint. Was he not gifted with powers beyond his fellows and at the same time denied the opportunity of developing them? What could be more tragic than to be conscious of one's capacity for a great career and to spend one's

days in selling ribbons and laces? These things were in his mind before the time came for his release from the establishment of Jackson & Moore. But they would never have taken any definite shape had it not been for the Rev. Henry Ditton. Of him something will be said hereafter. He may be introduced briefly here as one who had been a minister in the Methodist Church, but whose interest in charitable work had first diverted him from his religious obligations and then had led him to renounce them altogether. He did a great deal of good by helping to alleviate the distresses of the people among whom he worked and a great deal of harm by preaching Socialism to them. It was while he was holding forth to an audience on the Common one Sunday morning that Baretta, who was sauntering by, stopped to listen. Something in the tirade against wealth and luxury fell in with the young man's mood. He was conscious of the stirrings of ambition, and he saw no way to give them scope. He had read and studied just enough to make him discontented with his daily labour, but too little to fit him for any higher occupation. Like others in the same situation, he blamed circumstances rather than himself. He thought that he was not having a fair chance in the world; and, this being the case, the world itself was necessarily all wrong. When he said that he must get on, there was no cynic by to express a doubt as to the necessity. The quality of egoism was very strongly developed in this young man. It had early found expression in his separation of himself from his father, and it had directed all his subsequent career. His love of knowledge arose primarily from his recognition of the truth of the old maxim that knowledge is power. Ditton's preaching suggested to him the way in which he might use this power to the best advantage. The majority of men are willing to adhere blindly to the established order of things. But the man who boldly antagonizes it may make himself respected and even feared. Baretta listened to these Socialistic harangues week after week, each time with a fuller appreciation of their potency. He lingered in the outskirts of the crowd, and sometimes took part in the discussions that went on there. His constancy attracted Ditton's attention, and one day Ditton followed him as the audi-

ence was dispersing, and spoke to him. Never had a teacher found a more apt pupil. Baretta's was one of those intellects which are as facile as they are superficial. He quickly became familiar with all the jargon of Socialism; it appealed strongly to his feeling of personal injustice. Ditton was shrewd enough to play upon this string until he had bound the young man irrevocably to his cause.

Reminiscences of those days were floating through Baretta's mind as he walked across the Common on this warm April afternoon. He was now twenty-four years old, and his association with the Socialist preacher was no longer a novelty. He considered that his assistance had been of the greatest value to Ditton, and that the burden of gratitude did not rest upon his shoulders. He had given up his situation with Jackson & Moore to devote himself to the work, depending for his support upon the contributions which were collected from the enemies of society. This work was partly propagandist and partly charitable. Ditton's idea was to relieve as much human misery as he could, and then to insist that this misery would not exist were it not for the laws enacted by the rich to grind the faces of the poor. Such an argument struck Baretta as unanswerable. Perhaps his zeal was stimulated by the fact that there was more excitement in this hand-to-mouth agitation than in standing behind a counter and earning a weekly salary. It was gratifying, at all events, to feel that one was becoming a power in the world. Even the depressing surroundings of a stuffy little room in Arragon Street could not obscure this important feature of the situation.

Arragon Street lies between two widely-known thoroughfares, although it is itself practically unknown. The houses which front upon it are low-browed and squalid, for the most part only three stories high, with narrow doorways separated from the pavement by only a single step. Madrid Street, into which Arragon Street empties, is much more pretentious. It boasts no less than three apartment-houses—the St. Clair, the Beaumont, and the Plantagenet, the names being inscribed in gilt letters on the glass over the door. Here there are lace curtains in the windows, and sometimes a Rogers group or a large family

Bible resting upon a marble-top stand. And although the men in Madrid Street do not seem to differ materially from their neighbours in Arragon Street, but sit without their coats in the full view of the public, the women, on the other hand, devote a great deal of attention to their personal appearance, and are often to be seen issuing forth in very gorgeous raiment indeed. It is frequently intimated in Arragon Street that this finery is not always honestly come by, but with that cruel slander we need not concern ourselves. No doubt some of those who utter it are no better than they should be. Baretta could have told many queer stories of the people among whom he passed his days if he had chosen. His faculty of observation was very keen, and he saw much that others might not have seen. He had chosen his lodgings, in the first place, because they seemed to promise unusual opportunities for understanding this vast problem, to the solution of which he had devoted himself. The dirt and squalor were not agreeable to him. His income was both narrow and uncertain, but it would have afforded to him better quarters if he had chosen. Perhaps he had something of the conscious pride of martyrdom in remaining where he was. Now, however, he was thinking with resentment of the inequalities of human existence. There was Yates, for example—why should everything be made so smooth for him? He failed to reflect, as most of us do on similar occasions, that no man knows where another's shoe pinches.

The sun was sinking below the roofs of the city when Baretta turned into Arragon Street, and the warmth of the early afternoon was yielding to the chill which the air of spring always holds in reserve. The place looked unusually squalid to his discontented eye. It was near the hour of supper, and various children who had been despatched to the bake-shop for a loaf of bread or a pint of milk were lingering on the reeking pavements to swear at one another, taunts in many cases leading to shrieks and blows. Two or three dishevelled women, with dirty shawls thrown over their heads, were hurrying home with pitchers and cans. These had been, in the parlance of the neighbourhood, "working the growler;" in other words, they were returning from a near-by saloon with beer. These sights and sounds

struck Baretta with an unusual sense of loathing. As he entered the doorway of one of the dingy houses something like a shudder convulsed him for a moment.

The odour of frying onions greeted him as he ascended to his room. Peter Dolan, his landlord, was very fond of onions; they went well, as he said, with tripe or liver, or with a piece of round-steak, cut thin and done brown. Dolan had little to say to his tenant. He did not like his foreign looks, as he told Mrs. Dolan. When he was drunk, which happened about twice a week, he expressed this dislike with oaths and curses. These were not addressed directly to Baretta, of whom Dolan was a little afraid. He knew that he could knock the young man down with a single blow of his ponderous fist. But the trouble with these foreigners was that they would not fight fair. Dolan respected the knife which his imagination had concealed somewhere about Baretta's person. He told his wife that "dagoes" always carried knives, and that this lodger of theirs was undoubtedly a "dago." This legend had one result which added considerably to Baretta's comfort. It kept the younger members of the Dolan family at a distance. Only at rare and furtive intervals did they dare to rummage his room, and if they took anything of his with a view to converting it to their own use, the image of that sanguinary knife soon became vivid enough to induce them to return it. Poor Mrs. Dolan, to do her justice, was an honest and kindly woman, who tried to bring up her family as decently as her own limited ideas and the conditions of life in Arragon Street would permit. But the legend of the knife was no doubt more effectual than the maternal discipline.

"It's tripe to-night!" shouted one of the children from the creaking stairway to the third story as Baretta paused on the second and fumbled in the darkness for the key-hole to the door of his room. He locked up his belongings when he was to be away for any length of time. "You ain't drunk, are you?" continued the voice.

"No—what do you mean by that?" retorted Baretta. He threw open the door and a ray of light penetrated the gloom of the passage. "Which young one are you?" he asked.

"I'm Alice. I thought you might be drunk, because dad

was drunk last night. My!" The girl screamed with mingled fear and delight at the recollection.

"You shouldn't talk like that, Alice."

"I guess I'll talk anyway I please." The legendary knife had not exercised any appreciable influence upon the manners or conversation of the young Dolans.

"No, you won't, miss—not to Mr. Baretta," said another voice. It was that of a young woman who had come unobserved from the other end of the dim passageway. "I'm ashamed of you." She hesitated a moment, and then added, impulsively, "Oh, Mr. Baretta, what must you think of us all?"

The young man stood in the doorway, looking at her with admiring eyes. She was a pretty girl—in the way that so many girls are pretty—and as their glances met, she smiled brilliantly. She had black hair and eyes, a fresh complexion and a rather luxurious figure. Probably by the time she was forty she would be red-faced and fat; but at twenty the impression which she made upon the masculine eye was distinctly agreeable.

"You know what I think of you," said Baretta, smiling back at her.

"Oh, come now!" She tossed her head defiantly.

"Say, Maud!" called the small girl on the stairway. "Is he your beau?"

"Alice!"

"Because," continued the shrill marplot, relentlessly, "I heard pa tell ma last night that if he wasn't he'd better stop making up to you. P'raps 'twas only because he was drunk."

The young woman's face flushed crimson with mortification. "Alice!" she gasped again, helplessly.

Baretta, who was still standing by the open door, took up the conversation at this point. "Alice," he said, severely, "if you plague your sister like this do you know what will happen to you?" He frowned at the offender, who almost instantly vanished into the obscurity of the floor above. His countenance was rather lowering at all times, and it was not surprising that this simulated anger should be terrifying. "Miss Maud," he added, after a moment of hesitation, with an impulsiveness that

betrayed his foreign blood, "I wish—I wish very much that I could help you."

"Me!" cried the girl, bitterly. "Oh, I ain't worth the trouble."

"You shouldn't mind what they say. As Alice remarked, your father was—that is, he didn't mean it." His dark eyes swept her face for a moment. "I don't see why we shouldn't be friends."

"Friends! You can go among the swells for them."

"I don't know what you mean by that," said Baretta, coldly. "Of course, if you wish me to mind my own business and leave you to yourself—"

He stepped inside the threshold, but she followed him and put one hand on his shoulder beseechingly. "Don't be angry with me, Frank. There, I ought not to have called you that, but it slipped out, somehow." She looked about the room with the air of one who is venturing upon unknown territory. "I suppose it ain't proper for me to be here, but I don't care. Why should I set up to be any better than the rest?"

"Maud!" cried Baretta, turning suddenly, and grasping both her hands in his, "it hurts me to hear you talk like that. I know how hard everything is for you. But—but it can't last forever. You wrong me when you talk about my going among the swells. What do they care for me, or I for them? I only follow my work where it leads me. But you—I want you for a real friend."

The only reply which the girl made to this appeal was to burst into tears. Then, without a word, she turned and fairly ran from the room.

Baretta gazed after her, hardly knowing whether to be gratified or piqued. He was sincerely sorry for her, and he was anxious to help her, as he said. How far her youth and good looks influenced him in this wish we need not too curiously inquire. To do him justice, it must be said that he had never consciously made love to her, although he admitted to himself that he was fond of her. He had lived in Arragon Street for three years, and had watched her as she developed into womanhood with a good deal of interest. The other members of the Dolan family

were not attractive. Maud was the oldest. Then came two boys, Peter and Patrick, sixteen and eighteen years old, three girls, another boy, and the youngest girl, Alice, who was nine. It was a large family, and Mrs. Dolan had a hard task of it in trying to bring the children up respectably. The example of the husband and father was certainly not elevating. Dolan was a mechanic, and a fairly good workman when he was sober. But his fondness for bad whiskey led to periods of enforced idleness, when the household finances ran very low indeed, and the outlook became particularly gloomy. Things were somewhat better now that four of the children were earning something. They had been able to stay in Arragon Street, although threats of eviction had been uttered from time to time by an indignant agent. Baretta paid two dollars a week for his room, however—he was always careful to give the money to Mrs. Dolan—and this was a great help. It was a high rent for that quarter of the city, but the young man paid it willingly. Were not these people among the complaining millions whose lot he had sworn to ameliorate? There were times when he felt that he must go—that the conditions of existence in Arragon Street were wellnigh intolerable. But he made the resolution only to break it. Possibly his interest in Maud was a controlling influence.

“Poor girl!” he sighed, closing the door gently after her abrupt departure. He was thinking of the question—“Why should I set up to be better than the rest?” The problem of “the rest” had often haunted him. He was not sure what place these wretched creatures would have in his scheme of a regenerated society. He regarded them with a profound pity. He could understand why vice—which at first is seldom a creature of dreadful mien—should attract them. During these three years he had known of more than one girl who had got tired of being better than “the rest” and had gone to the bad. Their homes were like Maud’s, or even worse. To them recreation meant escaping from these squalid dens to wander up and down the brilliantly-lighted streets which lay within easy reach. After that the first false step was so perilously inviting. He said to himself that Maud should not take it, so long as he was by to prevent. She was really a very good sort of a girl. She had been to the pub-

lic schools, and had added to her native intelligence aspirations distinctly beyond the life she was now leading. He did not feel sure that these aspirations were intellectual; he had observed that her reading was mostly confined to novels by "The Duchess" and Bertha M. Clay, and although his own knowledge of literature was limited, he knew that these were trash. This, however, was a weakness that could be remedied. Possibly he had thought of himself as her future guide, philosopher, and friend. If this were the case he had not looked forward to the more prosaic question as to how he could become all these unless he married her. And, at all events, it was not on his conscience that he had ever led her to credit him with such an intention. He had never even kissed her, although at more than one episode in their intercourse it had occurred to him that she would not have resented it if he had. "Poor girl!" he now said to himself, thinking of Alice's revelation of the sentiments expressed by Mr. Dolan. Of course the man had been drunk when he said that Baretta was making up to his daughter, but the words must have expressed a sentiment dormant in his mind at sober moments. The young man felt sure, now that the case was put to him thus definitely, that nothing had been further from his intention.

Yates had asked his caller to stay and dine with him, but Baretta had refused on the plea of having too much to do. Yet now that he was in his room he remained absolutely idle for a long time. He sat in front of a flat table—a shabby black-walnut affair that he had picked up cheap at an auction-room—and gazed moodily at the scattered papers, many of them circulars and pamphlets, which strewed its surface. He even forgot that it was time to go to the dingy restaurant in Tremont Street where he usually dined when he was alone. The noise of Dolan's arrival in the entry below might have reminded him of the omission if he had been disposed to pay any heed to it. Dolan was evidently sober this evening, but he was also in a very bad temper. Baretta heard the noise of falling objects with a half-unconscious recognition of the fact that the head of the family was kicking over the chairs in his disgust at having to wait a few minutes for his tripe and onions. "When a man

comes way from South Boston, he's hungry," was Dolan's comment, although he garnished this statement with oaths that it is not necessary to repeat. "Poor girl!" said Baretta once more. Mrs. Dolan was as much to be pitied as anybody, but she was a less interesting object of sympathy than her daughter.

Presently Baretta arose and lighted his lamp. When he had done this he took up a book that was lying on the table, and opening it at the title-page looked at it long and earnestly. Perhaps what interested him so singularly was the name on the fly-leaf opposite. This was written with a stub pen in that scrawling and angular hand which women affect nowadays. The name was "Mildred Lawrence." He sighed again, but this time he did not say "Poor girl!" What he did was rather curious. He raised the book softly to his lips, then closed it and put it back on the table. And then, after another interval of silent contemplation, he put on his hat and went away to his dinner. Peter Dolan was cursing and swearing with unusual vigour as he closed the front door behind him.

CHAPTER III

TERRA INCOGNITA

THERE were only three people in the room when Baretta entered it. One of these was Mrs. Chilton herself, who smiled as she gave him her hand and observed that it was really very good of him to come. She added that she was afraid her friends were going to forget her to-day.

"Perhaps they know I am to be here," said the young man with a lightness of manner that did not sit easily upon him.

"Oh no!" said Mrs. Chilton, rather coldly. There was a moment's silence, during which Baretta felt painfully conscious of having made a blunder.

"I did not mean—" he began.

"Do you know Miss Tredwell?" asked Mrs. Chilton, interrupting him. She glanced at a pretty girl who sat by the tea-table listening with a bored expression to the conversation of the remaining occupant of the room. This was a man—past his first youth, but still young—who rose as Mrs. Chilton spoke, although it seemed impossible that he could have heard her, and came towards them.

"I am not going to let you monopolize Miss Tredwell," said Mrs. Chilton. "Besides, I am sure she wants to know Mr. Baretta."

The other man said something that sounded like "Haw!" and stared at the new-comer in what he thought was an insolent way. Baretta flushed, and looked at Mrs. Chilton as if he were expecting an introduction. When, instead of gratifying this expectation, she took him across the room to Miss Tredwell, he felt more uncomfortable than ever. Was the stranger some one too important for him to know?

"Oh yes, I have heard all about you from Mildred Lawrence," said Miss Tredwell, smiling at him. Baretta stood by awkwardly with his hands in his pockets. Mrs. Chilton had moved away after presenting him, and was now talking with her other caller.

"Miss Lawrence—she is very kind," stammered Baretta.

"Why don't you say you admire her? They all do." Miss Tredwell smiled again.

"Oh, I—I wouldn't dare." The question seemed to him a very bold one to ask, and it disconcerted him still more.

"Really, now! How modest—there aren't many young men like that." Miss Tredwell poured some hot-water from the samovar into a cup, and dipped a silver ball into it two or three times, the water taking a deeper discolouration at each immersion. The process was new to Baretta, and he wondered vaguely what strange decoction it was that she was preparing. "Two lumps?" she asked, suddenly, looking up at him.

"Oh, why—is it for me?"

"Don't you take tea? I know some men don't care for it."

"Tea? Thank you." Baretta sat down helplessly in the chair nearest this self-possessed young woman with a crushed sense of his own lack of self-possession. It was a new sensation to him. He was used to being a dominating influence over the people among whom he went. He recalled, with something like bitterness, Maud Dolan's remark, that he was making friends of the "swells." What would she think if she could see him now?

"I think it's rather nice, because it gives one an excuse for seeing people. One hates making calls, but if one's friends have an afternoon, it is so easy to run in for a cup of tea, and say a word here, and two words there, and run out again. People don't have half the chance to get tired of you that they would otherwise. Don't you agree with me?"

"I? Oh yes. I think so." Baretta was hardly conscious of what she was saying. The feeling that he was out of place, that he was probably making an ass of himself, was quite too humiliating. He had a wild desire to escape; he measured the distance to the door as if he were calculating whether he could

run the gantlet of Mrs. Chilton and of two ladies who had just arrived and reach it in safety.

"Are you looking for Miss Lawrence?" asked Miss Tredwell, following the direction of his eyes. "That isn't very polite, you know, when you have the privilege of talking to me." She smiled at him again, and he noticed how very blue her eyes were and how brilliantly golden—almost red—the hair was, which, growing in a bushy mass, framed the mischievous little face. "But I am getting quite used to it—oh yes! You needn't apologize; I shouldn't believe you if you denied it."

All this was bewildering enough to Baretta; but he was not a dull young man, and he began to see that Miss Tredwell's remarks were not to be taken too seriously. He pulled himself together with a resolution to stick out the ordeal as best he could. "Well, then," he said, "I won't apologize."

"I like your frankness. I shall tell Miss Lawrence that you were looking for her all the afternoon, and that you were very rude to me."

"Oh, I beg you—" he began. But he found that Miss Tredwell had suddenly turned to speak to a tall, dark young man, good-looking, and (as it seemed to him) elegantly dressed, who had approached unobserved.

"Will you give me a cup of tea for Mrs. Stanwood?" asked the young man.

"Mrs. Stanwood?" Miss Tredwell nodded and smiled at a lady across the room. "I didn't see her come in. You are a very great stranger, Mr. Wyman."

"I appreciate the compliment implied in your consciousness of the fact," said Mr. Wyman. He took the cup which the girl held out to him. "Will you let me come back by-and-by and show you that I am grateful?"

Baretta sat by while this was going on with a feeling that he was being snubbed. Who were these people, and why didn't Mrs. Chilton introduce him to them? Was he expected to sit in the corner all the afternoon with this chattering young woman—who was doubtless poking fun at him—perhaps to be stared at as a curiosity, but with no chance to make any impression upon the unfamiliar world which he had been asked to enter?

He began to think that he had made a mistake in coming at all. What did any of Mrs. Chilton's friends care about him or his schemes for ameliorating the lot of humanity? They had never known the pinch of want or the pangs of misery, and why should they concern themselves with creatures less fortunate? He had been a fool to imagine that Mrs. Chilton had any genuine interest in him or his career. Still, she had invited him to her house, and she ought not to neglect him entirely.

"May I trouble you to take this to Miss Linley?" The question interrupted these bitter meditations, and he turned to see Miss Tredwell holding out a cup towards him. He rose to take it, and then he looked at her hesitatingly. "But I don't know who Miss Linley is," he said. "I haven't been introduced to any one—except you."

"And I don't count—is that it, Mr. Baretta? Oh, don't take the trouble to deny it; I know when a man is bored. That is Miss Linley on the sofa. I dare say you and she will find enough to talk about. She goes to the Annex."

All this increased the young man's confusion. To go up to a young woman one didn't know and plunge into conversation with her—that was a strange thing to do. But Miss Tredwell seemed to take it quite as a matter of course, and it was to be supposed that she knew what was proper. Then once more the determination to make the best of it came to his aid. He reached for the plate of biscuit with his free hand, and thus equipped crossed the room.

"Miss Tredwell sent me," he said, pausing in front of Miss Linley. She was a pale, thin girl, rather forbidding of aspect, and she regarded him inquiringly through her eye-glasses. "I—I am Francis Baretta."

"Oh, thank you," said Miss Linley, taking the tea and declining the biscuit. "Charming weather, isn't it?"

"Yes, very."

"Mrs. Chilton has been telling me about you." She gathered her skirts about her, and Baretta interpreted this as an invitation to be seated. "You must tell me all about your work. I am greatly interested in it."

"Oh," he said, awkwardly, "I didn't suppose that Mrs. Chilton had told any one about me."

"It's too bad this is her last Thursday. One always meets such clever people here, and Socialism is something new. But you might give some lectures next winter. You could have our parlour for the first one. Mamma always likes to have things. There's so little that is really intellectual going on."

"I hadn't thought of anything of that sort. I go in for practical work."

"You don't mean bomb-throwing, do you?"

Baretta stared. "I think you must have a very queer idea of what Socialism is," he said.

"Then you must tell me. Oh, really, I am very anxious to learn."

"I'm afraid that would take more time than you are likely to wish to spare. You see, it isn't mere talk alone that's going to help humanity. Of course you've got to show them how bad the present system is. But it's more important to construct than to destroy. When the present social system is overthrown we've got to have something to take its place."

"And what will that something be?" asked Miss Linley. "Plato's ideal republic?"

"Plato? He isn't one of those German fellows, is he? I never took much stock in them."

"You don't mean to say—" Then Miss Linley paused and looked at him helplessly.

Baretta laughed. "It was a very bad joke, wasn't it?" he asked. He could not bear to confess the truth—that he had never heard of Plato; although, considering how well he had improved in other directions his limited opportunities, it was, perhaps, nothing to be ashamed of.

"I am afraid that I don't appreciate jokes," said Miss Linley, coldly. The young man's air struck her as offensive, and she began to think that she had gone much too far in an acquaintance with him. "Perhaps," she added, rising and handing him back the cup, "the lectures wouldn't do any good, after all. Is that Mr. Pinkerton? Oh, you do not know him?"

Then her face became as absolutely expressionless as it is

possible for a human face to become, and Baretta recognized the fact that he was dismissed. He went back to Miss Tredwell with mingled feelings of rage and shame. He would get out of this at once.

"Oh no—don't say you are going!" cried Miss Tredwell. There were two or three young men about her, and she was beaming impartially upon them all. "Why, there are so many people who haven't met you. Mrs. Chilton," she called, as that lady drifted by, "you mustn't let Mr. Baretta go yet."

Mrs. Chilton looked at the young man's flushed face and took in the situation at a glance. She had been rather thoughtless; she was so used to having her callers look after themselves that she had forgotten the embarrassment of his position as a newcomer, to whom even the simplest social observances must be strange. "Oh, I cannot think of letting you get away yet," she said, laying a detaining hand upon his arm. "When so many arrive all at once, one is apt to forget about the rest. And I was talking about that wonderful poem of Browning's, 'Mr. Sludge the Medium,' with Mr. Pinkerton. You must know who Mr. Pinkerton is—Albert Hazard Pinkerton. He reads Browning exquisitely. He was with Miss Tredwell when you came in. He wants to know you." Mrs. Chilton cast a rapid glance about the room. "Oh, he is talking to Miss Linley. How did you like Miss Linley? She's a remarkable girl. She's at Harvard—in the Annex, you know. They say she is a wonderful mathematician. Here comes Mr. Allen. Oh, you must meet him—Mr. Orrin Fox Allen, who got out that lovely book, 'Round the Zodiac in Rhyme.' Have you seen those articles of his on 'The Confusions of Sex' in the *Northern Review*? I don't agree with him, but they are immensely clever; you ought to read them. Mr. Allen, I have been warning Mr. Baretta not to believe what you say against us women."

"Mr. Baretta will not believe that I could say anything against some women," said Mr. Allen with a bow. Then he extended his hand to the young man. "I'm glad to make your acquaintance," he said.

"Mr. Allen is interested in Socialism—as an intellectual move-

ment," said Mrs. Chilton. Then some one came up to speak to her, and the two men were thus left together.

"Yes, I want to have a long talk with you on that question," said Mr. Allen. "We haven't much of a chance here. You must come out to Brookline and see me."

"I am afraid that I'm a poor hand at paying visits," said Baretta. The other man's cordial manner had put him more at his ease than he had been hitherto, but he thought of his former blunders and resolved to feel his way discreetly.

"Oh, well, you will find time some day. I hear you do a great deal of good among the lower classes. Of course that's the thing, after all—practical help. With all due respect to you and the rest, I don't think we shall see the Socialistic reorganization of society in our day."

"It may be nearer than most people think. If you could come with me among the lower classes, as you call them, and understand all the miserable conditions of their existence, you might be more willing to credit them with seeing the way of escape."

"Ah, yes—if you are sure that it is a way of escape. But pardon me for offending you by my ill-judged phrase. It's simply the conventional fashion of putting it, don't you know?"

"I know," exclaimed Baretta, somewhat bitterly. "It's one of the things we are going to abolish."

Mr. Allen laughed good-humouredly. "I would go in for Socialism if it would abolish some things." His eye took in the figure of Albert Hazard Pinkerton, who was now talking languidly to a faded-looking lady of uncertain age. "There's Pinkerton, now—his Browning readings ought to be abolished. Your regenerated world won't have any need of them, or of the paragraphs which he writes for the society papers. In fact," added Mr. Allen, laughing again, "if there isn't any society there won't be any society papers. That woman he's talking to is Mrs. Medora Watt-Jones. She spells her name with a hyphen—no one could ever find out why. Probably you've heard of her."

"What does she do?" asked Baretta, whom this satiric commentary upon his neighbours was beginning to mollify.

"Oh, that is what a good many of us would like to know.

All these women in Boston who write make a tremendous cackling at times, but somehow or other the nest always seems to be empty."

"I hope you don't include Mrs. Chilton in that category."

"One always excepts one's hostess," said the other man, gravely. He glanced about the room again. "There's Miss Lawrence just coming in. She is what I call a nice girl. I like her immensely, although I don't think she returns the compliment. Of course you've never heard of her. Well, she isn't a celebrity—like you and me," he added, smiling.

"It happens that I know Miss Lawrence—very well," said Baretta, proudly.

"Indeed! Then you must agree with me that she is charming."

"Yes." Baretta was aware that this cold assent sounded ungracious, but he felt that he could not discuss Mildred Lawrence with a stranger. How exquisitely beautiful she looked in that close-fitting, fawn-coloured gown. How sweet was the face under the wide-brimmed hat! This was the silent comment (perhaps too favourable) of an impressionable young man. To other eyes Miss Lawrence was a rather pretty girl, with soft brown hair and brown eyes, finely-cut features, a complexion just a little too pale, and a tall and well-formed figure. But what mere catalogue like this ever did justice to any woman possessing a fair share of good looks? You cannot imprison the *Ewig-Weibliche* in a photograph—much less in cold print.

"I dare say, now, one would call Hamilton Wreath a celebrity," Mr. Allen continued, indicating a man who was standing near the doorway. "That is he, talking with Miss Varian—you must have seen Miss Varian at the Lyceum; she's a delightful actress—you can see that by the way she pretends to be interested in Wreath's talk. He comes from the wild and woolly West; he writes those stories in the *Aurora*—all about life on the prairies and that sort of thing. He's one of the realists. Oh, you ought to know him; I am sure he is interested in Socialism. I wish he'd trim that straggling beard of his and take a bath. But I beg your pardon—perhaps you do know him."

"No," said Baretta, stiffly, "I haven't that pleasure."

"A man who will wear a frock-coat and a white tie—oh, well, perhaps Mr. Wreath is a genius, after all, and it's impertinent to criticise him. I really think you ought to know him, though. Perhaps you could put him in the way of something realistic for his next story. I am sure he won't find any material here. We're all too conscious—too artificial. Ah, there is Mrs. Hunsdon. Do you know Mrs. Hunsdon? One can always remember her by her elbows. She uses them with great effect; they're sort of exclamation points in her conversation, don't you know. Mrs. Malaprop would have called her a fine example of female punctuation. She is signalling to me to come and talk with her. I'm very glad I met you; we must have a long talk together some day. Don't forget to come and see me in Brookline."

Then the two drifted apart. Baretta had already come to the conclusion that he did not like Mr. Allen. He had a feeling that if he made fun of others he would make fun of him; and the young man was very sensitive to ridicule. He recalled now that remark about the frock-coat and the white tie, with an uneasy consciousness that his own frock-coat—it was the best he had—might be out of place. He had been regretting before he came his lack of what he called a dress-suit; but the fact that no one in the room wore one gave him some comfort.

Presently Mrs. Chilton came up again; and one or two people whose names he did not remember wanted to talk with him about his "mission." Baretta was usually fond of his own eloquence on this point; but the idle chatter of those whom he felt sure had no interest in the Socialistic movement somehow annoyed him; he thought that they were only trying to get a little amusement for themselves. Indeed, no one seemed to be very much in earnest about anything. He had heard that all intellectual Boston came together at Mrs. Chilton's. He now said to himself that intellect did not seem to be much in evidence just at present. The harshness of this judgment was perhaps a little mollified after a time, as he intercepted nods and glances which were evidently aimed in his direction, and thus came to the flattering conclusion that Mrs. Chilton's friends had heard of him, after all, and that she had not asked him to come only to ignore him. And while these thoughts were passing through his mind,

and he was exchanging casual words with this person or that—the painful shyness that had possessed him at first was passing away—he was wondering if he should have a chance to speak to Miss Lawrence. She had smiled and nodded at him across the room. Now she was in the corner with Miss Tredwell, and several young men were hanging over the two with what seemed to Baretta to be unnecessary solicitude. His dark face took on the scowl which made it so unattractive, as he watched them.

“He’s a most extraordinary looking man, Mrs. Chilton,” whispered Mrs. Medora Watt-Jones to her hostess. “Of the Italian brigand type,” she added, as she saw the scowl. “Oh, I’m sure I wouldn’t want to get his ill-will. I should be afraid of the vendetta, and that sort of thing, you know. Is he an Italian?—it’s an unusual name.”

“He is a Hungarian, I am told,” said Mrs. Chilton, “and of good if not noble family. His father was a political refugee.”

“Ah—a companion of Kossuth! How romantic! I suppose he is really Count or Prince, or something of that kind.”

“Oh no—I think not. I met him at the Lawrences; I only know what they told me. Indeed, judging by what I have observed, I should say—”

“Well?” asked Mrs. Watt-Jones, expectantly.

“Nothing at all,” said Mrs. Chilton, hastily. She was a good-natured woman, and she did not want to say that Baretta’s manners had not struck her as bearing out the theory of his superior birth. “I dare say,” she added, “he is a gentleman. You must ask Miss Lawrence if you want to know more.”

“I assure you the young man has not aroused the slightest interest or curiosity in me,” declared Mrs. Watt-Jones, inwardly resolving to discover, if she could, something to the disadvantage of this adventurer whom Mrs. Chilton had seen fit to introduce.

During this dialogue Baretta had worked his way into the neighbourhood of the tea-table, and now Miss Lawrence looked up and spoke to him over the shoulder of one of the obnoxious young men, who had turned to speak to Miss Tredwell. “Oh, Mr. Baretta!” she said.

It was not exactly a brilliant remark, but it had the effect of

smoothing out the frown in Baretta's face. He edged along a little farther until he had reached her side.

"Mrs. Chilton told me you were coming," she remarked.

"And is that why you came?"

The girl's countenance took on an expression of reserve in striking contrast to its previous friendliness. "I don't think you quite realize what you are saying, Mr. Baretta."

"I am making a mess of it all round!" the young man exclaimed, savagely. "I think I had better go back to my natural level—among what you would call the lower classes."

"You are unjust. But—but it was I who was to blame for misunderstanding you."

"Oh, I see what a mistake I have made: I ought never to have come at all."

"I do not think that," said Miss Lawrence, gently. "But, there—let us forget this silly dispute, and say that we were both to blame. Miss Tredwell tells me that she had quite a conversation with you. Don't you think she's a charming girl?"

"Oh yes—very," said Baretta, vaguely.

Here their conversation was interrupted, and Baretta was again left to his reflections. The fact that he had been rude to Miss Lawrence filled him with dismay, and added to his conviction of the folly of trying to make his way among people with whom he could naturally have little in common. It was quite true that he had better go back—to Arragon Street and Maud Dolan. He could marry Maud; of that he felt sure. But Mildred Lawrence—he might break his heart for her; she was infinitely above him. Certainly all her friends would say so. In spite of all those foolish hints he had given out concerning the importance of his family in the country from which his father came, they would look upon him as a mere adventurer; and they would be justified in doing so. His father might have been a refugee, for all he knew, but he was pretty sure that he had not fled from political oppression. What would be said of him if the truth were known? It was idle to talk about one man being as good as another; he might preach this doctrine, but instinct told him that it was false.

Miss Lawrence rose as if to go, and Baretta rose, too. He

was conscious of a strange throbbing at his heart as he stood waiting for her to pass, and he hardly heard what Daisy Tredwell was saying, although she was obviously talking to him.

"Good-bye," said Mildred, gently, turning and holding out her hand.

"But I have so much I want to say to you," declared the young man, following her. "May I not walk along with you?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" she cried, hastily. Then, as she saw the blood mount to his face at this rebuff, she added, "I have another call to make, Mr. Baretta. But I shall be at home tomorrow afternoon, and, of course, I shall be very glad to see you."

Five minutes afterwards Baretta had taken a confused farewell of Mrs. Chilton and had left the house.

CHAPTER IV

"NEVER IS A LONG WORD"

PHILIP YATES was profoundly dissatisfied with himself and his prospects at this period of his career. He felt that he had not improved his opportunities as he should have done, which is upon the whole worse than not having had any opportunities to improve. Laying the blame for failure upon circumstances induces a kind of vicarious satisfaction; but nothing is more miserable than the conviction that one's direct personal responsibility does not admit of such an excuse. And Yates had no desire to indulge himself in pleasing fictions regarding his own conduct. When one has been a fool, and others are aware of one's folly, it is idle to deny it. In such a case honesty is emphatically the best policy.

But, after all, the folly of which Yates had been guilty was not so very culpable. Hundreds of young men do worse things and live to be reputable citizens. He had neither vice nor dishonour to lament. It was only because so much had been expected of him, and he had done so little to satisfy expectation that the tribunal of his own conscience condemned him. Many men would have taken the verdict more lightly. But there was a personal reason why it should go hard with Yates. He was separated from the woman whom he loved. He had not been quite frank with Baretta in telling him that Mildred Lawrence was an utter stranger; and yet he knew that if he should meet her in the street she would go by him with downcast eyes. There had once been such a meeting, and this was what had happened. Philip felt that he was being very hardly used; surely if she had ever loved him she could not have had the

heart to do it; but after a time he began to see that the blame was his. All the happiness for which he had once believed himself to be destined he had thrown away forever. His was an essentially genial nature, and this habit of morbid introspection was new to him; its recurrences were therefore sporadic, and nothing would have surprised some of his friends more than to tell them that Yates was cherishing a secret grief. His fair complexion, his broad shoulders, his erect carriage, his easy striding gait—all these characteristics somehow combined to impress upon the observer a conviction that he was prosperous and cheerful. One could not argue anything but the perfection of mental and moral health from his redundant physical vigour. Men liked him and women adored him for this superb masculinity. Sometimes those less abundantly gifted, like Baretta, envied him.

Philip's history may be briefly narrated here. He came of an old family—one that had been honourably identified with the early history of New England, although in these days its eminence had been somewhat obscured by the lack of the wealth which is essential to social leadership. Still, a Yates had advantages which it would be idle to decry. Philip had told Baretta that he lived in Bohemia, but this was clearly an exaggeration. If he was not seen in certain places, it was rather because he chose to hold himself aloof than because entrance would be denied him if he sought it. The fact is, that having a modest income, he was too proud to associate with those who had large incomes except upon equal terms. They might overlook the difference, but he could not. And, indeed, he found Bohemia a pleasant country. In spite of the fact that he had been a rather noted athlete during his college days, his taste led him to books rather than to sport. He had as yet done nothing in literature—turning off reviews for the newspapers did not count—but he had not quite abandoned all hope in this direction. He had wasted the years of his youth, it is true; but when a man is only thirty it is hard to believe that his career is behind him. He was alone in the world, and he could supply his own wants whatever happened. That was the one source of consolation which he had. It was not much to a

man who had started out with great ambitions, and had been unwilling to admit that they were not likely to be satisfied, even when others had recognized their futility.

Philip's boyhood was passed mainly at the old homestead in Lexington, a handsome mansion of the colonial type, surrounded by ample grounds. He had fitted for Harvard at the famous school at Exeter, where, in addition to his feats at foot-ball, he had shown promise of noteworthy mental achievement. During his Freshman year at Cambridge he might have passed for a fine example of the *mens sana in corpore sano*. Then the change came. It was not so much the time he took as one of the Varsity eleven, as his pursuit of branches of learning not provided for in the catalogue, which brought him to the point of just barely escaping being dropped at the end of the Sophomore year. He fell into the habit which is most fatal to scholarship—that of general reading. Very possibly he had a more intelligent appreciation of the subjects which he studied than some men who left Harvard with a *magna cum*; but intelligent appreciation does not get a man "marks." Philip had no memory for small details, and he did not try to cultivate one; so that a few inconvenient questions put by the examiner were sure to trip him up. Of course there was a good deal of disappointment over the result at home. His father was a shy, studious man, and he could not understand this strange mixture of brilliancy and stupidity. Philip was very sorry, and next year he really did better. But on Commencement Day his name was pretty far down in the list, and his mother and sisters were denied all hope of seeing him on the platform of Sanders Theatre in the gown which they felt sure would be so becoming to him. The worst of it was that he had written his part, and that one of his tutors told him it would surely have been accepted for delivery had not the very poor showing which he made in the rank-list prejudiced the committee against him. He took the rebuke philosophically enough; it was only the mortification of the people at home that troubled him. Unfortunately, the impression that he "didn't amount to so very much" gained ground among his acquaintances when he dawdled through the Law School for two years more, and finally left without taking

his degree. He declared, of course, that he had no taste for the legal profession. But the question why he had not found this out before was an obvious one; and he was not very successful in answering it. Meanwhile Mr. Yates the elder had died, and Philip had now a small income of his own—sufficient to relieve him of all concern in *la lutte pour la vie*; which may possibly have been a bad thing for him. He did not go to Lexington very much after this; he felt that he was in bad odour at home—not because he had done anything wrong, but because he had done nothing at all. Women will oftener forgive downright vice than inconspicuous failure. If Philip had been “wild,” Mrs. Yates would have shed many a tear. But tears at least relieve the o’erfraught heart. When a son does neither well nor ill a mother is denied the solace of grief no less than the comfort of joy. Philip had continued in this uncomfortable state for so long that all hope of his emerging from it had been abandoned. Mrs. Yates told her friends vaguely that he was devoting himself to literature; but when they pressed her for particulars, she could only say, “Oh, for the magazines.” She had a single article signed with his name, which she could show to unbelievers. He sent her marked copies of the weekly paper for which he wrote now and then. But to these contributions there was no name attached, so that the result seemed to her to be almost too intangible to mention. Once he told her to wait until his novel was published. She took the saying for a jest, however, and still thought of his prospects with gentle melancholy.

Baretta’s reference to Mildred Lawrence had affected Philip strangely. It brought back all his old love for her with bitter intensity. He knew that it was hopeless, but he went on cherishing it just the same. If ever he tried to forget, a chance allusion like this would bring back the memories of the past in a resistless tide. Oblivion is, alas! impossible to humanity this side of death. Each experience leaves its ineffaceable mark. When what is gone seems gone beyond recall, a glimpse of sky or sea, a strain of music, a familiar voice, a dimly recollected face, will bring it all back. There is a poignant truth in the old saying that one will forgive but not forget. Forgiveness is within our power, but forgetfulness is an impossibility. Philip

knew that if he should see Mildred to-morrow, and she should greet him with the old half-shy, half-welcoming smile, there would still be something between them which could never be obliterated. Sometimes he thought that she had treated him badly ; it is not in human nature to accept without question all the responsibility for having made a wretched failure of life. Since Baretta had mentioned her name, Philip had made her preference for "that fellow" the point of numerous unuttered epigrams. How the deuce did she come to know him, anyway? He felt an absurd, unreasoning jealousy of the young man. There was something incongruous in a friendship between those two. He himself had made Baretta's acquaintance in a curious way. In his pursuit of novel experiences—he had a vague idea that he would "write them up" some day—he had gone to one of the meetings of a Socialist club of which he had heard. A foreign-looking young man, who seemed to be one of the leading spirits of the occasion, had denounced with great fervour the tyranny of capital. His impassioned earnestness had at once aroused and interested Yates, who took pains to get a chance to talk with him. Baretta was always willing to expatiate upon his plans for the redemption of humanity to any one who would listen ; and Yates struck him as a man whom it would be worth while to convert. It is true that he had made no great progress in this direction during the year which had elapsed since that evening. But perhaps he was a little proud of knowing one whom he had set down as a "swell." At all events, he urged Yates to come to the club again, and was very polite to him when he came ; and once or twice, when the meeting was over, he had accompanied Yates down-town, and had accepted his request to come and take supper with him. Thus the two young men fell into something approaching intimacy, for Philip was good-natured and tolerant, and liked to meet people on a plane of democratic equality. He called Baretta "my dear fellow," and bade him drop the absurdity of addressing him as "Mr. Yates." But when he heard this man from nowhere speak of Mildred Lawrence in that familiar way he resented it ; when he came to reflect upon the matter afterwards, it seemed to him almost an insult. He muttered something

about a beggar on horseback, and resolved that he would cut Socialist meetings and Socialist orators.

He was thinking of Miss Lawrence, and of Baretta's inexplicable association with her, on this bright spring afternoon, a few days after that young man's visit to his rooms, as he strode up Commonwealth Avenue under the overarching elms, now faintly green with the promise of foliage. Suddenly his heart seemed to stand still, and a sensation akin to faintness came over him. What slender figure was this approaching him through the sunlit vista of the long mall? Was it indeed Mildred herself? She was advancing in apparent unconsciousness of his presence. He hesitated for a moment, with a half-formed resolution to avoid her. Surely a meeting could only be a source of pain. But, no—what had he done that he should shrink away like a thief? He was willing to acknowledge that their separation was for the most part his fault. And yet she might have forgiven him. That she had not done so showed him clearly enough that she had never really loved him. Well, he would meet her face to face—he would let her see that he bore his hurt without wincing. The two drew nearer. Her eyes were averted from him. Perhaps she did not see him—perhaps she was trying not to see him. Philip walked on, looking squarely at her. In another moment he would have passed her. But then a sudden resolution took possession of him, and he stopped and called her name.

“Mildred!”

The girl looked up quickly; and now her usually pale face was flooded with sudden colour.

“Are you unwilling to speak to me?” he asked.

“I do not think it would be any use,” she said. But she did not hurry away, as he had feared she might. She waited as if to learn what it was that he wanted of her.

“Perhaps you are right,” said Philip, rather bitterly. “But I am going to ask you to let me say a few words, and then—well, it shall be as you decide.”

“I have decided.”

“And you condemn me without a hearing! You are unfair—unjust!”

"Did you stop me to tell me that?" The words sounded harshly, but in her face were only sadness and regret.

"Will you let me walk with you a few steps?" Philip went on, with a sudden assumption of calmness. "I must not keep you standing here." Then, as he saw her hesitation, he added, "I have done nothing so disgraceful that you need fear being seen in my company."

To this Mildred made no reply. She bowed slightly and walked on by his side with downcast eyes. But, as he looked at her, he saw that her lips trembled, and that a single tear glistened on her long dark lashes.

"I only wish to express my sorrow," Philip continued, "for the bitter things I said to you that day when—when we parted. I was quite unjust; I acknowledge it frankly. I am a wretched failure—a disappointment to myself no less than to all my friends. But—but I think I could have given you some reason to have confidence in me—I think that I might now make more of my opportunities—if all that would render it worth while were not lost. You were a little hard with me, Mildred—oh, I am not complaining!—and your words stung me so that I retorted too sharply; and so we had our quarrel, and the end came. If—if I ever had a hope that we might be friends again, what you have said to-day has dispelled it. Yes, I was an idle, worthless fellow; you were right in thinking that I would have made a bad husband for a girl who had ambitions. And yet God knows I would have tried to make you happy!"

"It was not that—together," said Mildred, in a low voice. "Well, since we have met once more I will tell you something which perhaps I ought to leave unsaid. If I reproached you with your idleness—if I seemed harsh and cruel—it was not because I despised you, as you think, but because I believed you capable of better things. And then—then you took everything amiss and spoke the bitter words that parted us."

"Mildred!" cried the young man, with a new light of joy in his face. "Can you—will you forgive me? I tell you I regretted the words as soon as I had said them—I ask your forgiveness from the bottom of my heart."

"Ah, yes—I ought not to have spoken; I should have known

you would misunderstand me. Don't you see, Philip, that it isn't regret, or anything in this world, that could blot out the past from my memory, or even from yours?"

"Oh, you are quite wrong—you are quite mistaken. It is absurd that a few hasty words should separate us. If you ever loved me—"

"Yes, I did love you," said Mildred, calmly. "I—I love you now—what is the use of pretending otherwise?" Again her lips trembled, and a blush swept over her white and delicate face.

"And if you love me—"

"I am sorry I told you. But you could not understand me, no matter what I said." She stopped, and held out her hand. "I will shake hands with you, and say good-bye." There was a look of something like agony in the mysterious depths of her eyes, but her voice was firm and clear.

Yates took the hand in his, although he hardly saw it for the sudden mist which blinded him. "Good-bye!" he said. "And—and you wish to be strangers?"

"Yes—that will be best."

"Oh, Mildred!" Then, as she drew her hand away, he realized where he was, and that chance passers-by might be regarding them curiously; and a resolution to bear this blow like a man took possession of him. "Well, I yield to your decision. I shall not speak to you again. Is that your wish?"

She nodded.

"And I need not hope that you will forgive me?"

"No," she said, quite gently; "I think that I can never do that."

He gazed at her a moment in silence, as one might gaze at a dead face before the black earth shuts it away forever. It was by the open grave of his love that he was standing. "Never?" he repeated, in the voice of one who is dreaming. "Never is a long word!"

CHAPTER V

THE ENEMIES OF SOCIETY

THE room was not a large one, and it was crowded with tables, around which men were sitting, with glasses of beer before them. The air was thick with tobacco-smoke, and to Yates, who was looking in through the doorway, it seemed at first intolerable. He was half inclined to go away, but just then one of the waiters beckoned him to a vacant seat, and so he made his way thither, nodding at one or two familiar faces as he sank into it. He felt that it was absurd in him to come, considering that he had resolved to have no more to do with Baretta and his friends. But he was in the mood to welcome anything that promised even a moderate degree of diversion.

Baretta had not yet arrived. Indeed, he often stayed away from these gatherings. He felt that a lot of men drinking beer in the back room of an Eliot Street saloon would never accomplish the great ends which he was seeking, or get beyond a vague expression of their individual grievances. He had often suggested this view of the matter to his friend and teacher, the Rev. Henry Ditton, and had been told by him that you must take men as you find them, and that there was no knowing when the truth might strike home. Ditton was already in the room. He stood in one corner, talking with Stephen Luck, the labour agitator. He was an impressive figure, even in the shabby black coat which he wore tightly buttoned across his chest, the limp and not too spotless collar, the greasy white tie, the voluminous black trousers bagging at the knees and frayed at the bottom, the patched shoes guiltless of blacking. His face was furrowed and worn, a three days' stubble of beard covered his chin, and his

keen gray eyes peered out from their penthouse lid of shaggy brows. He afforded a striking contrast to Luck, who was fat, red-faced, red-haired, and indescribably vulgar.

"Phwat are yous doin' here?" said a voice in Philip's ear.

The young man looked up sharply at this offensive inquiry. An Irishman with a hard, square face and a curiously mottled complexion had taken a seat beside him, and was staring at him with a look that seemed aggressively impertinent.

"I don't know that it is any concern of yours," answered Philip, coolly.

"Ain't it, now! I'm a working-man, an' this is a working-man's club, and we don't want any gintlemen about prying into what we're after doin'. See?"

"Look here, my friend, I advise you to keep a civil tongue in your head." Philip took up the glass of beer which the waiter had placed before him, and drank off a part of the contents. "This isn't the first time I've been here, but I don't remember seeing you before."

"Shure, yer honour, I meant no offinse," said the man, with an obsequiousness which was not especially ingratiating. "Maybe ye're some friend of Mr. Baretta's. It's him that got me to come."

This fact seemed to Philip to need no comment, and consequently he made none.

"It's Mr. Baretta who's the great orator. Them furriners mostly are, though I'm dommed if I'd trust one of 'em. I worked with some dagoes on the railroad once, when I was out of a job at my trade, and ivery son of a gun among 'em carried a big knife. They don't fight fair wid their fists—or wid a good club."

"I don't think Mr. Baretta carries a knife."

"Who knows?" asked the other, shaking his head, solemnly. "It wasn't whiskey ye were goin' to send for, was it, to cilebrate this j'yous meetin'—was it, yer honour?"

"Oh, well, whiskey let it be, then," said Philip, good-naturedly.

"Thank ye. To pay for the drinks is the mark of a true gintleman. It's too bad Mr. Baretta isn't here to jine us, though

it's a dom proud one he is; he'll live in a man's house for years, an' niver once be social like, except," added the man, frowning, "with them he'd better lave alone."

"Do you mean to say that Mr. Baretta lives in your house?"

"He does that; quare for a swell like him, ain't it? But Peter Dolan don't kape him there. Dom him!" cried Mr. Dolan, savagely. "I'd like to pitch him into the strate to-morrer."

"I suppose," observed Philip, "the fact that he pays his rent restrains your ardour."

"Rint!" exclaimed Dolan, after gulping down the whiskey and wiping his mouth upon his sleeve. "Do ye suppose I don't care more for my gyurl than for the dirty rint? It's him that's puttin' all sorts of notions into her head by makin' up to her, and pretendin' to be a gintleman."

Knowing little or nothing of Baretta's manner of living—he had spoken vaguely of a room at the South End once or twice—this revelation of his landlord's sentiments regarding him was in the nature of a surprise to Yates. But if the allusions to the daughter stirred his curiosity, he had no wish to obtain any further information from this source.

"Mr. Ditton is going to speak," he said, presently.

"Who's he? The feller standin' on the chair?"

"Yes; listen."

Ditton had rapped the rather noisy crowd to order by pounding on the table with a stick, and from the eminence which he had mounted he now addressed them.

"As I was on my way hither to-night, my friends," he began, "I passed a church. The doors were open, and they were evidently holding services inside. I tell you, it made me sick at heart to think of all that idle mummerly. I said to myself that the man who preaches religion is a dangerous man. 'Why?' you ask. 'Isn't religion what we were taught at our mother's knee? Isn't it what we teach our children? Isn't it what we shall all want when the time comes for us to die?' I thought so once. Yes, my friends, I was a parson, and I went around with a sanctimonious face preaching hell and damnation to those who didn't agree with me. It's the truth—that was just what I did. But now I see how wrong I was, and I

tell you—and I want you all to remember it—that the man who preaches religion to you is your worst enemy. Why? Because religion leads to temperance. ‘Ah!’ you will say, ‘temperance is a good thing.’ I deny it. Now don’t misunderstand me; I don’t mean that you ought to get drunk.”

“Be jabbers! some of us will,” cried a voice from the unknown murky depths of smoke that surrounded the speaker.

“No, my friend, no; I hope you’ll have more sense. Drink all the beer you want, but don’t put into your stomach a lot of bad whiskey and go home and beat your wife. When I say temperance is a bad thing I mean that the man who never drinks at all gets to saving up money. Well, what is saving up money? It’s economy, isn’t it? And when a man tries to be economical, what does he become? Why, industrious, don’t he? ‘Oh yes,’ you say, ‘but industry is a good thing. Every step in human progress has been gained by industry.’ Are you so sure of that? Is what these rich employers of yours call over-production—is that progress? Over-production! It’s a nice word; it means shutting down in the mills and the shops, so that they can be drawing interest from their money instead of paying it out to you—so that they can buy houses and charge you high rents for living in them. Yes, perhaps it is progress—towards the workhouse!”

Here a loud stamping and clicking of glasses greeted Mr. Ditton’s eloquence.

“Over-production! The working-man’s enemy and the poor man’s curse! If that’s the kind of progress you want, God help you!”

“He’s right!” exclaimed Dolan, looking first at Yates and then at his empty glass. “There’s to be a shut-down at the works next wake, bad cess to ’em. An’ what’s a poor man to do then?”

“Drink less whiskey,” answered Philip, unsympathetically. “Ah, that fat, red-headed fellow is going to speak.”

Luck had mounted the chair in Ditton’s place, and now launched forth into an angry tirade against the bloated capitalists who were sucking the life-blood of the poor. It was a far more fiery harangue than Ditton’s had been, and it aroused the

audience to greater enthusiasm. "This nation," he cried, after he had excoriated certain local firms, "has been brought by the men who call themselves your masters to the verge of moral, political, and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot-box, runs riot in Congress, elects Presidents, and makes Judges. The gold-bugs of Wall Street have the machinery of government by the throat—yes," he added, with a touch of pride in this effective metaphor, "by the throat. And the people—you and me, all of us—are ground to dust beneath the iron heel of monopoly. What do we work for? What becomes of the toil of millions? It's stolen—stolen to build up colossal fortunes, such as the world has never seen before; and the owners of them despise us and scoff at liberty. Some of you came from a land which British misgovernment has made a hell upon earth"—here he had to pause until the shouts and cheers had died away—"some of you came from a country where an enormous standing army swallows up the flower of the young men; but what is this New World, where you thought every man had a chance? There are two classes to be found here—paupers and millionaires. I guess there ain't many of the millionaires here to-night."

"Ach, nein!" cried a raucous German voice. "Ve vas none of us dose tings."

"My friend is right," said Luck, mopping his brow with a dirty handkerchief. "Why is it? I will tell you—it is because the national power to create money is used to enrich bondholders; because the supply of currency is abridged to fatten usurers, to bankrupt enterprise, and to enslave industry. We're just as badly off here as they are in Europe. A vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized on two continents, and is taking possession of the world. It must be met and overthrown. The working-man has the power; let him use it. Let him combine everywhere to protect his own interests, by peaceable means if possible, by force if necessary. Let no one shrink from the conflict. You and I can secure our children's heritage, even if we baptize the soil of our country with our own blood."

"Good! You're right, Steve!" came from a dozen throats in answer to this appeal.

"And remember this, my friends—we've got to fight this battle alone. The newspapers are subsidized—there's a big capitalist at the elbow of every editor. The men you send to the City Hall and the State House and to Washington are against you—they've been bought up by the men who build fine houses on Commonwealth Avenue—ah! isn't that a satirical name for the place where the millionaires live? They don't want you to organize for self-protection—they don't want the pauper labour of the Old World shut out. Not they! What do they want? They want to make you slaves!"

Beer and eloquence had by this time combined to rouse the company to a high pitch of enthusiasm, and in the din which followed the further remarks of the speaker were heard imperfectly by Philip in his corner. Dolan, seeing that no more whiskey was forthcoming, had moved to another table. Philip himself, more exasperated than amused by the wild harangues to which he had been listening, and more than ever convinced of the absurdity of his position, was making up his mind to go, when his eye caught that of Baretta, who had just entered, and who was edging his way through the crowd towards him. Philip had no special desire to see the young man just then, but he felt that it would be rudeness on his part to avoid him.

"I didn't suppose you would be here to-night," Baretta said, after they had shaken hands.

"Oh, you can never count upon my movements," was the answer. "I have been rewarded by a good deal of fiery eloquence from that red-headed man who's trying to make himself heard above this infernal din."

"You don't like him, then. Well, he's a good deal of a humbug. His name is Luck—Stephen Luck. He is a walking delegate for some organization or other, but he does more talking than walking. It's fellows of that sort who injure the movement."

"I take it, then, that you don't agree with all the rot about bloated capitalists and subsidized newspapers."

"Well, no—only up to a certain point. But it isn't his ideas to which I object so much as the character of the man. He the

working-man's friend! He takes mighty good pains to be well paid for his friendship—that's all I can say. It's a great thing to fight society when you drink champagne and smoke Havanas, and drive about in carriages."

"Oh, that's the kind of a reformer he is, eh?" laughed Yates. "Well, one might readily suspect as much."

"Ditton, now," went on Baretta, "he's earnest—he's sincere. I believe, Yates, that he's poorer to-day than I am, and Heaven knows that's saying a good deal. But I keep a roof over my head, though a poor one, while he—why, I've known him to wander about the streets all night because he didn't have the money in his pocket to pay for a night's lodging. I think I'm sincere, but I couldn't quite go that. You see, he gets money enough—we chip in money all round at these meetings, and when he preaches on the Common he takes up a collection—but the first case of misery he comes across, why it's all gone. That's the kind of man he is." And there was a note of genuine admiration in Baretta's voice as he said it.

"Ah, yes—one can respect a man when he gives up everything to an idea. Speaking of a roof over your head, is that person—see, at the second table—really your landlord? That is what he has been telling me."

Baretta coloured, and hesitated a moment before replying. "Oh—ah—you mean Dolan. Landlord! Well, that's a big word for a man who rents you a single room in his house. I suppose you are disgusted to think of associating with one who lives in such quarters."

"Didn't you just hear me say what I thought of men who can make great sacrifices?"

"Thanks!" exclaimed the other, rather bitterly. "I appreciate the compliment." He looked frowningly at the table for a moment; then he lifted his eyes to Yates's face. "What did Dolan have to say about me?" he asked.

"Surely, you cannot expect me to betray any confidences which a gentleman may have reposed in me."

"Come, Yates, this is no jest with me. I know the fellow dislikes me—if it wasn't for his poor wife I would cut the place to-morrow."

"All I can say is," observed Philip, calmly, "that your dislike for Mr. Dolan seemed to be fully reciprocated."

"Then he did talk about me!" Baretta frowned again and bit his lips. "See here, Yates," he began, suddenly. Then he paused in an embarrassed way, as if he did not know exactly how to go on.

"Oh, well," said Philip, with a look of surprise, "if you are really so much concerned to learn the tenour of Dolan's remarks, I don't mind telling you that they were brief and pointed, and seemed to be based upon the theory that you were 'putting notions into the head of his gyurl'—doubtless a misconception on his part."

"Dolan is a fool! That comes of taking an interest in people—of trying to do them a kindness."

"You pay the penalty of being too attractive to the gentler sex, Baretta."

"At any rate," said Baretta, angrily, "if I know a person I don't try to deny it."

"Indeed! And may I ask you what precise bearing that remark has upon the subject of our conversation?"

"You know very well what I mean. Other people than yourself walk in Commonwealth Avenue."

"Oh!" The colour mounted to Philip's face, but he preserved his impassive attitude. "It seems to me, Baretta, if you will permit me to say so, that you are rather impertinent."

"How dare you talk to me like that?" cried the other, with flashing eyes.

"Let me give you a piece of advice—you seem to be in need of a judicious friend. 'Dare' is an ugly way to put it. Your Socialistic dispensation hasn't come yet. You had better keep your temper."

Baretta glanced at him in a fashion which, oddly enough, reminded Philip of Dolan's theory that every foreigner carried a knife. His lips were white with vindictive passion, and his nostrils expanded like those of a frantic horse. "I'll pay you out for this yet! You are in the conspiracy against me with the rest. You lied to me when you said you didn't know Miss Lawrence, and then you try to prejudice her against me."

"I don't know whether it will be more charitable to conclude that you are drunk or that you are crazy," said Yates.

Baretta's anger seemed to die away as suddenly as it had arisen. "I say, Mr. Yates," he began, in an embarrassed way, "I wish you would forget all this. I—I hardly knew what I was saying. But when you told me that you did not know Miss Lawrence, and when I saw you talking to her the other afternoon, why, of course, I—I—"

"It hardly strikes me as necessary to drag her name into this conversation. Since, however, you have brought up the subject, I will tell you frankly that the lady in question and I are—are not on good terms, and that I was perfectly justified in telling you we were strangers. You will greatly oblige me by not referring to this again."

"Oh, of course—just as you like." He glanced about him, and saw that Luck was no longer speaking. "If you will excuse me, I will see what Mr. Ditton proposes to do next." He started to go, then turned and addressed Yates again. "I really hope that you'll overlook what you call my impertinence."

"Let us say no more about it, Baretta. I think I must be going now. I dare say I shall see you again very soon. Good-night."

Baretta walked away with only a nod. He was enraged with himself for having given way to such an outburst of anger, and he was also furious to think that Yates should have undertaken to rebuke him for it. His plea that he must speak with Ditton was of course only an excuse for escaping from an unpleasant situation. He saw that he had blundered in alluding to Miss Lawrence at all, and especially in letting Yates know that he had witnessed their meeting—or rather their parting—the afternoon before. It was his luck always to be making mistakes of this sort. Intercourse with people who doubtless thought themselves better than he seemed to be full of pitfalls. He knew, of course, that they were not better—that few of them were so clever or of so much consequence to the world. But the aggravating feature of the situation was that they took their own superiority for granted with the utmost calmness, and that he, when he was with them, found himself tacitly admitting it. He was vexed now

because he had apologized to Yates ; and yet somehow an apology had seemed the most natural thing under the circumstances, notwithstanding the fact that justice was on his side. Oh yes—Yates was like the rest in scoffing at him, in trying to keep him down ! Fortunately he had talents which would enable him to rise in spite of everything. Perhaps some day Miss Lawrence would be proud of his acquaintance. He saw himself in imagination the object of her shy and silent admiration, and he forgot for the moment the fumes of bad tobacco, the odour of stale beer, and the raucous voices around him.

“There’s going to be trouble over at the South Boston works,” said Ditton, as Baretta came up. “Luck has been telling me about it.”

“Well, Luck ought to know,” remarked the young man. “He’s probably responsible for it.”

“What do you mean by that ?” demanded the agitator, excitedly. “Do you think I make the trouble ?”

“You ? Oh, I bring no accusations ; if the coat fits I suppose you may put it on.”

“See here, Baretta,” cried Luck, shaking his pudgy fist, “you’ll get into trouble if you ain’t careful.”

“If you think I’m afraid of you, my good man, you’re mightily mistaken. All I say is that a strike isn’t going to do us a particle of good. That way of going to work was shown to be a failure long ago.”

“You know an awful pile, you do,” sneered Luck.

“Come, come !” interposed Ditton. “We’ll have no quarrelling. That isn’t the way to succeed, at any rate. If the men are not getting their rights, why, they must demand them, that’s all. It’s better to strike than to submit tamely to injury and oppression.”

“That’s all very fine,” argued Baretta. “But what is to become of the families of the men meantime ?” He glanced about the room, and his eye fell upon Dolan, who was just then swallowing another drink of whiskey. “Take the case of fellows like Dolan, now,” he went on. “Just as soon as they’re out of work they’ll spend all their time getting drunk, instead of a part of it.”

"Well, you'll have to look out for his family," said Luck. "I guess you do that with some members of it now."

"You're a damned dirty loafer, Luck—that's what you are," said Baretta. Then he turned on his heel and walked away, regardless of the volley of oaths that followed him.

CHAPTER VI

POOR MAUD

THE home of the Dolan family was not an enlivening place at any time, and on a rainy afternoon in spring it seemed particularly dismal. From the window of the front room on the first floor, where Maud was sitting with her sewing, the outlook was not inviting. The only living thing in sight was a shivering cat, who cowered close to the grating of a cellar window opposite. Through the dingy panes of the blank row of houses not a single face peered, and all the doors with the greasy imprints of thousands of fingers about the latches were tightly closed against the storm. In the roadway the dust and refuse characteristic of Arragon Street in pleasant weather had been turned by the ceaselessly falling drops into an oily black mixture, thick and slab, like the ingredients of the witches' caldron.

Maud sewed on with a discontented scowl. She had never taken things easily, as the other children did, and of late her circumstances had been peculiarly hateful to her. She felt that she disliked her father and despised her mother. This might be very wicked; but it was the truth, and what was the good of pretending? She was sure that the one had done, and the other could do, nothing for her. When a man who might have earned good wages, and made a home for his children in some neat cottage out of the city, threw away his money in drink and compelled them to live in a squalid street in the slums, he forfeited all right to respect or affection even from those nearest to him. As for her mother, she was honest and kind-hearted, to be sure, but also stupid and ignorant, and no companion for a girl who had been half-way through the high-school. Besides, wasn't

she vicariously to blame, as it were, for marrying such a husband? Maud Dolan did not argue it out with herself precisely in this way, but feelings of this nature were at the bottom of her dissatisfaction with her environment. Sometimes she felt that she must get away from Arragon Street at any cost. But just at present no feasible method of escape offered itself. She had figured out her resources many a time, but had never been able to satisfy herself that they would warrant her in leaving home for good. Nothing could be gained, certainly, by leaving a place where, after all, she had the freedom of a house, to coop herself up in some wretched stuffy room in a neighbourhood scarcely more agreeable. She wanted to live in a "genteel" boarding-house—this was the adjective which expressed her social aspirations—where the quality alike of the food and of the grammar was better than in Arragon Street, and where there were nice young men who did not confound the functions of knife and fork, or sit about in their shirt-sleeves with unbuttoned waistcoats. She had seen such young men behind the counter at Jackson & Moore's. "I wonder how he can stand it," she murmured, breaking her thread with a jerk.

Perhaps it is needless to add that "he" referred to Baretta. The girl would have denied indignantly an accusation that she cared for him more than for another. But her fancy had idealized him sufficiently to make his approval a matter of some moment. When she put on a new gown, which was rarely enough, or tied a fresh knot of ribbon at her throat, it was with a tacit hope that he would observe how becoming it was. To these intangible coqueties, however, Baretta had not been very responsive, although his manner to her bore the stamp of a chivalrous tenderness—real or assumed—which was about as dangerous as outspoken adoration. Thus Maud came to feel that their lodger was of a finer clay than the coarse and commonplace young fellows whom she knew, and whose conversation was mostly slang and chaff. She was regarded by these, and by others who would naturally have been her intimates, as "stuck up"—the sort of girl, as one of them said, who would just as likely as not slap your face if you hugged her. Indeed, Maud despised the amorous pleasantries that marked social intercourse in Arragon Street.

Perhaps it was pride rather than delicacy that influenced her. Baretta, it will be remembered, had on several occasions thought that she would not have resented a kiss from him. But then he was not a red-faced young Irishman with a three-days' growth of bristling beard, and he did not eat onions and indulge in daily potations of whiskey. Her compliance on this point, however, had not been put to the test. She simply felt that she had a friend in this young man, and that life would be inexpressibly more dreary than it was if she were separated from him. Again and again she had wondered why he stayed. With his aspirations for the regeneration of society she had little sympathy. He had never talked to her very freely about them, and in any case she might not have understood them. She knew what a terrible thing it was to be poor; but she pitied not so much the wretchedness and misery around her as herself for being involved in them. If she could free herself from her present life she would not have much time for thinking of those who had been left behind.

The dull afternoon waned as Maud mused and sewed. Just as the gathering dusk warned her to put aside her work, she heard the front door open, and then a step on the stairs which she recognized as Baretta's. She rose and went to the passage—now almost as black as night—and stood there a moment irresolutely. "Yes—I will!" she murmured at last, defiantly. "I must talk to some one." Then she glided up the narrow flight and rapped lightly on Baretta's door.

"Oh, Miss Maud—is it you?" His manner betrayed confusion, and as he threw open the door the girl speculated vaguely as to the cause of it. In another moment her quick eye had caught a glimpse of an open valise on one chair and a number of books piled up on another.

"You are going away?" she cried, starting back with an irrepressible look of dismay.

"Why should you care for that?" asked Baretta. "Why should any one care?" he added, bitterly.

Maud felt the hot tears pressing against her lids. But, no—she would not cry and make a fool of herself! Why, indeed, should she care? "I'm not good at guessing conundrums, Mr. Baretta," she said, with a laugh.

The retort touched the young man's vanity to the quick. "You have managed to answer my question very effectually, at any rate," he remarked, with an assumption of indifference which the sudden flood of colour in his face belied. "But I beg your pardon—will you come in?"

"Oh, don't talk like that—I can't bear it!" cried the girl, with a sob. And now a big tear rolled slowly down her cheek. "You know how much your going will be to me. I suppose you'll despise me for saying so, but—I don't mind that—or anything."

"My dear Maud!" he said, very gently, with a sudden revolution of feeling. He took her hand and drew her inside the door. "I didn't mean to speak harshly; I know I have a friend in you. It is that which makes me sorry to go."

"Yes—but why do you go?" She took out her handkerchief and pressed it to her telltale eyes. "What a fool I am!" she cried, smiling at him tremulously.

"What a brute I am!" He turned his back abruptly and walked to the window. He felt strangely moved by her emotion, as well as fearful of its possible consequences.

"You haven't told me what is the matter," said Maud, after a moment of silence. "Have I annoyed you by asking?"

Baretta crossed the room again. "Won't you sit down?" he asked.

"No, no; I mustn't stay but a moment."

"I wish people would mind their own business," the young man cried, savagely, after another pause. "No—don't think I mean you. But there has been something said that has made it unpleasant for me to stay."

"Who said it?"

"Well, never mind that. I had some words last night with your father, and—"

"Oh yes!" interrupted the girl, angrily. "I see it all now. He has insulted you, and said things you can't forgive, and so—and so—"

"Perhaps he was right. We won't blame any one. And don't talk as if we were parting forever."

"It is much the same thing. What is the use of trying to

pretend that it isn't? And—and all will be so different here when you are gone."

She looked very pretty as she said this, and Baretta took her hand again. "I shall see you often," he said, eagerly. "Surely no one can object to that."

"I don't care; I won't stay here myself much longer. I am tired of it all. There's no good in living if you've got to live like this. Oh, Frank, can't you help me to go away?"

"I wish I could. Don't you like it at the shop?"

"The shop!" cried Maud, scornfully. "It's the shop that keeps me here just like a slave. Oh yes, to go in the morning and sometimes in the evening to sell newspapers, and candy to dirty children, and make out the bills when the first of the month comes round, and then have a miserable three dollars every Saturday night, and be stared at by rude men, and perhaps insulted coming home! Oh, that's a nice life for a girl, isn't it, Frank?"

"Damn them!" cried Baretta, with sudden fury. "Damn the rich men who have made this world a hell on earth! There—excuse me—I didn't mean to say that," he added, seeing that she had shrunk back, and was regarding him with some alarm. "But when I think of the terrible injustice to which society owes its very existence—well, we must all have patience for a little longer. They have been conspiring against me, too."

"Oh, Frank, what do you mean?"

"Yes, there's Stephen Luck—'twas he made the trouble between me and your father—and Ditton—oh, he'll look out for himself, I warrant you!" cried the young man, with a harsh laugh. "But I didn't think it of Yates—that he would lie to me and then go and try to prejudice her against me."

The only part of this tirade that was intelligible to the listener was the feminine pronoun. "Her! Who do you mean by her?"

"Nothing—no one at all."

"As if you expected me to believe that!"

"Well, then—Mrs. Chilton. Are you any wiser now?"

"I suppose she's one of the swells," said Maud, doubtfully.

"I mean that they're jealous of me—that they don't like to

see me getting ahead, because they're afraid of my ideas. Mrs. Chilton is the lady who asked me to her house the other afternoon to meet a lot of people."

"I remember," said Maud. Baretta had, indeed, told her something about a reception to which he had been invited, and she was compelled to accept this explanation of his sudden emotion as the true one. Yet she could not rid herself of the suspicion that it was not Mrs. Chilton of whom he was thinking when he let slip that reference to "her."

After this there was a moment of rather awkward silence between them. Baretta finally broke it by saying, "But you came to see me about something, didn't you, Maud?"

"Oh, never mind now, Frank. I was feeling wretched and miserable, and I wanted to tell you that I couldn't stand it any longer, and that I must find work to do that would take me away from here. But if you are leaving—well, I won't trouble you now."

She turned to go, but he called her back. "Don't say that, Maud!" he cried. "I want so much to do all I can for you." He walked up and down the room silently, while she stood there motionless, one hand upon her heart as if to stay its violent beating. Then in a sudden flash of passion he grasped the valise and threw it upon the floor. "By Heaven!" he cried, "I swear I won't go as long as you want me to stay!"

"Oh, Frank!" cried the girl, catching her breath. His outburst had frightened her for the moment. She turned to him, holding out both hands, and looking at him with eyes that were again full of tears. "Oh, Frank!" she repeated, softly, "how can I ever thank you?"

Baretta took her hands and drew her closer. Then he bent down and kissed her full upon the lips. "Oh, Frank!" she whispered once more, colouring to the roots of her hair. But she did not repulse him.

"It is a promise," he said, gravely.

At that moment the door opened below and a heavy footstep was heard thumping on the stairs. "It's father!" Maud said, under her breath, clinging to him in a frightened way.

"He must not find you here," said Baretta, gently pushing

her aside. "Go!" He followed her to the door, and then added, in a louder voice: "Oh yes, Miss Maud—thank you very much. I will read it and return it to you in a day or two."

A growling sound came from the head of the stairs at this juncture. "Phwat's this?" broke in the voice of Dolan. He seized his daughter roughly by the arm as she was hurrying by. She screamed aloud, more in fear than in pain.

"How dare you?" came to Baretta's lips involuntarily. He had stepped over the threshold and was now facing the other two in the narrow passage.

"Dare, is it?" cried Dolan.

"Oh, Mr. Baretta!" sobbed Maud.

"Get along down-stairs wid ye!" Dolan released her with a push that sent her reeling against the wall. "I'll settle with this dom villain."

But Baretta, thinking he had struck the girl, leaped forward in blind fury, letting out right and left. He had no great physical prowess, and the big Irishman, who was sober enough just now, could have picked him up bodily and thrown him out of the window if he had not been so entirely taken by surprise. "You coward, to strike a woman!" shouted the young man, bringing his fist down with a whack on Dolan's shoulder.

All of a sudden, to Baretta's intense amazement, Dolan burst out in a roar of laughter. This furious but futile onslaught appealed to his sense of humour, and thus averted consequences which might have been highly disastrous. "Ye're a dom fool," he said, throwing out one muscular arm to ward off the blows. "Kape quiet—I didn't strike her."

Thereupon Baretta stepped back to the doorway, breathing rapidly with the exertion he had been undergoing. To Maud, who, white and shivering with alarm, had watched the beginning of what seemed to her to be a terrible conflict, there was nothing absurd in what he had done. It was all for her.

"What's the book you was givin' him?" demanded Dolan, turning to his daughter.

"Oh, I—I don't know—"

"Dunno? That's a loikely story. Bring it here now, young man."

"Oh, well, Dolan," said Baretta, assuming a careless air, "if it will keep peace in the household to give Miss Maud back her book I shall be only too glad to do so." He went to his desk, and made a random selection from several volumes lying there. In the growing obscurity of the evening he could not read the titles. "But I think it's a pity I can't exchange a few words with your daughter without all this fuss. It's an insult to her and to me."

Dolan took the book without replying, and handed it to Maud. "You go down-stairs," he said. Then he advanced into Baretta's room. "I'd just loike a word or two with you, misther," he added.

"Well?" asked Baretta, regarding him impatiently. He felt that he had been placed in a ridiculous position and he resented it. He was a little angry even with Maud. Why need she have come to his room at all? It was really nothing important that she wanted to say to him.

"Ye took offinse last night, and said ye'd be going. Well, I don't care a dom whether ye go or stay. But the old woman has been taking on about it."

"I have made up my mind to stay."

"Oh, ye have? Thin we've got to have an understandin' loike. See?"

"I must confess that I don't."

"I'm an honest man, I am, an' my gyurl's an honest gyurl. If you intend to make up to her you must do it on the square. See?"

The forbidding scowl gathered once more between Baretta's eyes. "I'm not accustomed to treat women dishonourably, if that is what you mean," he said.

"Well, there's been too much talk, and I ain't goin' to have no more of it," said Dolan, doggedly. "I'd rather ye'd lave her alone. But I tell ye what, my fine feller, ye've got to lave her or take her."

"Do you mean to tell me," demanded Baretta, "that if I don't marry your daughter I can't speak a civil word to her?"

"I mane that, just. I ain't partial to furriners loike yerself, but I sha'n't stand no nonsense—moind that!"

Then Dolan turned on his heel and went thumping down the stairs, where Baretta could presently hear his voice raised high in argument with his family.

The young man was too angry to appreciate the ludicrous features of the situation in which he found himself placed. An hour ago he could have told Dolan that he had no intention whatever of "making up to" his daughter, and then have carried out his threat of leaving the house. But now he was in a measure bound by a promise to the girl herself—a promise which had been made under circumstances that might justify her in cherishing hopes it would be unmanly on his part to shatter. What a fool he had been to kiss her! He was not in the least in love with her, he told himself; but she had raised her shining dark eyes to his, and in them he had read so much gratitude, to say nothing of a warmer feeling, that the response had been spontaneous. Now it was too late to cherish idle regrets. His honour was pledged and he must stand by the bargain. He knew very well who it was that he loved. But that was a vain fancy. She was as far above him as the heavens were above the earth. She had always been kind; that was her nature. If he had ever dared to whisper his wild aspirations, however, she would have banished him from her presence forever. She would think him impertinent even to hint of love. What was he in her eyes but a humble dependent—one whom she felt obliged to treat with distant kindness? The social order which he had bound himself to destroy had set up artificial barriers between them; and he realized, with hopeless rage, that so far as they were concerned these barriers could never be broken down. When the great revolution came it would be against the class to which she belonged that the struggling mass of mankind would have to fight. And even if she might have the courage to take a true man for what he was, had he not by his own act made that impossible? There was little tenderness in his heart for Maud as he thought of this.

And Maud herself? When her father came down-stairs again she looked up from the corner where she had seated herself with something like terror. She was holding the book tightly, as if it somehow connected her with Baretta. She, poor girl, had no

longer any doubt as to his feelings towards her. There had been something fine and romantic in his behaviour. The hero of a "Duchess" novel would have promised to stay because she wanted him to stay, just as he had done. His kiss still burned upon her lips. Perhaps she had not made it quite clear to him that she was not offended. She could not recall that any of the countesses of whom she had read had ever been placed in a precisely similar situation, and therefore she had no precedent in the light of which to view her own conduct. Arragon Street was not a place which conduced to exalted ideas of life, and Maud had always been forced to draw upon the fiction of which she was fond for examples. Perhaps she was actually of no finer clay than those about her. But at this particular period in her career she certainly cherished aspirations which, if fulfilled, might have fitted her for a somewhat more refined environment. At least she was not hopelessly vulgar, like most of the girls whom she knew. They were content with the coarse pleasures at hand, while she was always dreaming of those "genteel" circles in which she imagined the young men at Jackson & Moore's moved. She knew that the "swells" with whom Baretta associated were beyond her, and she always thought of them as a hostile influence. She wanted him merely to be "genteel," and to take her away from Arragon Street. She did not at all understand his outbursts against society, although she could understand why he should be dissatisfied with his present surroundings. As we have seen, she had wondered how he could endure them. Now, as she reflected upon the promise that he had made so solemnly, she thought that she knew. Oh, she would be so fond of him—so proud of him! He would never regret that he had given up his swells for her sake. She knew that she would lay down her very life for him. What could she not endure with the hope of release at last? It was the thought that she might never be able to escape from her present surroundings which was so maddening. She had often said to herself that she would rather go to the bad altogether, as other girls in Arragon Street had done, than live on in wretchedness and squalor and become some day a mere household drudge like her mother. No doubt she betrayed in this a lamentable lack

of moral principle. But virtue is so easily practised by those who have no temptation to vice. And the unrewarded virtue of a woman like Mrs. Dolan seemed somehow contemptible to one who had been half-way through the high-school, and who recognized the mental superiority conferred by this distinction.

"I've given that dom cuss a bellyful," announced Dolan, drawing a chair up to the supper-table, and contemplating with pleasure the dish of sausages before him. "Here, Theresa," he added, addressing one of the younger girls, "take that pitcher and get us some beer. Here's the money."

"Don't be afther sendin' her," pleaded Mrs. Dolan. "Let one of the b'ys go."

"The b'ys is tired, like meself. What's a gyurl for, if she can't run errands?"

Mrs. Dolan sighed. "Do as yer father says, Theresa, but moind ye don't be gone long."

"Oh, there's a daisy young man at Toomey's now," remarked the girl, taking the pitcher.

"You jist let the young men alone," said her father. "There's too many of 'em round here, I'm thinkin'."

"'Tis hard to bring up a gyurl decent nowadays," observed Mrs. Dolan, as Theresa disappeared.

"Small thanks to you, old woman," grumbled the head of the family.

"I don't know what ye mane by that, Peter."

"Ask that dom furriner up-stairs, then."

"It's Mr. Baretta who's been a good friend to us," protested Mrs. Dolan.

"Och, he's a great feller among the women—hey, Maud?" cried Dolan, looking over at the corner where the girl sat. "Why don't ye spake?" he went on, as she said nothing. "Is it dumb ye are all of a suddint?"

"Father!" cried the girl, with a sudden blaze of anger, "you've no right to speak to me in that way."

"No right, ye hussy! It's a foine thing ye have a father to look afther ye."

"What was it you said to him?" Maud rose, and her face was

very pale, but she felt all the courage of the hunted creature at bay.

Dolan roared with laughter and swung a sausage triumphantly aloft upon his fork. "Ye've learnt yer lesson of imperence well," he said. "Ask him if ye'd loike to know." Then he roared again.

An angry red succeeded the whiteness in the girl's face. She stepped close to the table and faced her father defiantly. "Oh, how I hate you!" she said in a low voice, but so distinctly that every word pierced the air like a knife. "How I hate this life!" And before he could recover from his astonishment she had rushed from the room, slamming the door so violently that the dishes on the table rattled.

Dolan was too completely taken aback to resent this unheard-of insolence in his usual emphatic way. "That gyurl 'll come to a bad end," he muttered, making a savage slash at his sausage. "Shut up yer dom whimpering, old woman, and give me a piece of bread!"

But Maud hurried through the dark passage with a swelling sense of misery which manifested itself in choking sobs. For several minutes she stood by the open door, looking out at the gloomy street, chill and dripping with rain. Oh, if she could but get away from the dismal life she was leading! What hope was there for her so long as she remained? Even the consolation of Baretta's presence brought her only fresh trouble. Then she thought of the book he had given her, and glanced at it idly; for she had been holding it tightly all this time, as if it were the one link that bound her to possible happiness. It was a book of poems. Maud had never cared much for poetry; it struck her as silly stuff, and she wondered how grown people could waste their time over it. But the name on the title-page arrested her attention. "Laura Hastings Chilton"—that must be the Mrs. Chilton that Baretta had spoken of. If she was married, of course it was foolish to be jealous of her; but Maud wondered whether she was young and beautiful, and perhaps admired and flattered this young man. Then a name written in the fly-leaf, in a woman's hand, caught her eye. "Mildred Lawrence"—there it was in bold decisive letters. A sudden pain

shot through her heart as she looked. It was an unfamiliar name, but a supreme feeling of misery came over her at the sight of it. He had never spoken of any Mildred Lawrence—oh no! But now she understood whom he had meant by “her.”

She crept softly up-stairs and laid the book against Baretta’s door. Then she crept down again, and catching a hat and cloak from a hook in the entry, put them on and went out into the dripping, dismal evening.

■

CHAPTER VII

"UNDER WHICH KING, BEZONIAN?"

"I'm glad I found you at home; I want to have a long talk with you." Baretta's visitor stepped in from the narrow entry, holding at arm's-length a dripping umbrella. "Where shall I put this? It's raining cats and dogs outside."

"Take this chair, Mr. Ditton—you will find it more comfortable," said Baretta. "Though there isn't a great deal of luxury to be had in Arragon Street," he added, with a rather bitter laugh.

Ditton looked at him earnestly a moment before replying. He had a vague feeling that his influence over this young man, which had hitherto seemed to him to be all pervasive if not all powerful, was in some mysterious fashion dying away; and it disturbed him. Perhaps he had inherited a love of spiritual authority from his ministerial days. He was making converts now to a religion in which authority was denied, but he always half unconsciously addressed his followers from the elevation of the pulpit.

"You were wrong to quarrel with Luck," said Ditton, presently. "He has a very ugly temper, and he doesn't forget things easily."

"If you think I am afraid of him—" cried Baretta.

"No—I don't want you to be. But you ought to understand that dissensions in our own ranks only weaken us in our fight against the enemy."

Baretta, who had seated himself by the table, drummed with his fingers upon the wooden surface and scowled. "Well, I think he's one of the enemy," he said, at last.

"I don't see why you should say that. Mind you, I admit that he is capable of doing harm as well as good. But he's a great organizer, and organization is what we want."

"Yes, he can organize strikes, if that is what you mean. I have never been able to see, however, that making fifty or a hundred men knock off work for a month or two, and loaf around the street-corners and in the saloons, is bringing us any nearer to the equalization of social conditions. In fact, it seems to me to have just the opposite effect."

"Oh, you look at it from too narrow and personal a point of view, Baretta. The thing to consider is that these fifty or a hundred men are not getting their rights. They have a few hundred dollars a year while their employers have a hundred thousand. Now the increase they may ask for isn't much in comparison with the whole amount of the profits; but it's something, and enough to mean the difference between beggary and comfort to them. And they've got to make a stand somewhere—they've got to make the capitalists feel that they have the power if they choose to use it."

"That's all very well," said Baretta, irritably; "but demonstrating their own power is precisely what they don't accomplish. They spend a month of idleness—until their money is all gone, and they are in debt to the grocer, and have begun to go to the pawnshops to get money for drink—and then they go to work again at the employer's terms. Meanwhile fellows like Luck have been taxing other workmen to support the strikers—and themselves."

"You're talking like a capitalist yourself now; where did you pick up such ideas?"

"I suppose you mean that I'm a fool!" cried Baretta. "Thank you for your high opinion of me."

"See here, my dear young man," said Ditton, fixing his penetrating gray eyes upon his companion's face. "Are you hankering for the flesh-pots of Egypt already?"

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Ditton. I think I'm at least as true to the cause as that man Luck is. And I'm not saying that the working-man is treated right. Good God! don't I live here among working-men and see things every day that

make my blood boil? But I still insist that strikes of the kind engineered by the professional agitator are utterly useless. We can never get ahead by making demands that we can't enforce."

"Ah, yes—we may fail now. But some day there will be a combination of every trade, and it will succeed because it is irresistible. Think of it! That's the sort of strike we'll have yet. And when the capitalist feels the hand of honest labour at his throat he'll disgorge fast enough—don't you imagine he won't."

"Oh, a combination of that sort might be irresistible. But mercenary loafers like Luck will never bring it about. Besides, the trouble with the working-men always has been that they can't hold together for any length of time."

"See here!" interrupted Ditton, suddenly. "Are you thinking of playing traitor to the cause? Because if you are I don't want anything further to do with you."

"You've no right to ask such a question!" cried Baretta angrily, springing to his feet.

"Yes, I have. I want to know the kind of man I'm dealing with and what to expect."

"Well, then, I refuse to answer. If that is your opinion of me, you are welcome to it." He walked to the window and stood gazing down into the blackness of the street, through which at distant intervals the lamps sent forth an uncertain blur of light. "Good God!" he cried, after a pause, "haven't I had enough to annoy me to-day without this?"

Ditton, who had kept his seat with apparent calmness, ran his fingers through his hair contemplatively before replying. "I didn't mean to offend you," he said at last. "The question was a natural one. But I believe that you mean well—that you have only the natural impatience of youth."

"You are exceedingly kind," said Baretta, sarcastically.

"Come, now, don't get miffed about it. What has happened to annoy you?"

"Oh, various things; they wouldn't interest you."

"Don't be so sure of that. Have you had any trouble with Dolan?"

"Why should I have any trouble with Dolan?" asked Baretta, turning from the window and facing his visitor.

"I only know what Luck said—about his daughter."

"Luck is a damned officious fool!" cried the young man savagely.

"That may be, my friend. But let me advise you, just the same, not to get yourself tangled up with women. It doesn't pay."

"Don't you think I'm able to look out for myself?" asked Baretta, seating himself at the table again.

Ditton uncrossed his legs, leaned back in his chair, and once more ran his fingers through his hair. "I think too much of you, Baretta," he said, "to let you quarrel with me. Yes, I dare say you are able to look out for yourself in most things. You're an uncommonly brilliant fellow. But I don't believe you're past needing good advice now and then, any more than the rest of us."

"Thank you!"

"Come, come, drop that sneering tone, and listen to me. I beg your pardon for what I said about being a traitor to the cause. I have no reason to believe that of you, and I don't believe it. But there is always some danger of the best of us being led off on false scents. I thought you might have struck the wrong trail."

"Of course, if you would rather stick to Luck than to me—"

"Don't be absurd. The work we have to do is big enough for all the workers. Only don't get into any more rows with him. And let Dolan's daughter alone."

"See here, Mr. Ditton," said Baretta, flushing, "you seem to have got some queer ideas about me. Let me tell you exactly how things stand. I like the girl very well. But I'm not in love with her, if that's what you mean."

"I'm very glad to hear it, Baretta—very glad indeed."

"Dolan is such an old fool, though! He kicks up a row if I look at her, and Heaven knows it's only because I pity her, and want to help her—to help them all. Ask Mrs. Nolan if she's got any reason to complain of me. Look there," he added, pointing to the books piled up on the floor, and the valise lying

open on the bed, "I had made up my mind to cut the place altogether, only—only that they asked me to stay."

"They?" repeated Ditton with a smile. "Don't you mean 'she?' I don't believe you'd stay for Mrs. Dolan."

"Both," said Baretta. He did not think it necessary to describe the scene of two hours ago, or to refer to the interview which followed it. "And I said that I would stay—for the present. If the works shut down, or the men go out as Luck wants them to, I guess they'll need a friend."

"Well, well—I dare say you'll do what's right." Ditton hesitated a moment, and then added, "But there's one other matter I wanted to talk to you about. What's your idea in going to see those other women?"

"What other women? I don't understand you."

"Oh yes, you do. I mean these people that have receptions and things and ask you to them. Certainly they can't do you any good—if you mean to stick by us."

"Perhaps I can do them some good. If you mean Mrs. Chilton, she's interested in Socialism."

Ditton grunted. "Now I don't know anything about your upper crust here in Boston. I was born and brought up in Vermont, and before I found what my true call was I preached up there, and in New Hampshire, to plain, every-day country people. But I can tell you one thing. They're not in earnest—not one of them. They're only trying to amuse themselves with you."

"Well, I know one or two who are in earnest. •There's Mr. Sibley Lawrence—I suppose you've heard of him."

"One of the very worst of the whole lot!" cried Ditton, thumping the arm of his chair.

"Why, there isn't a man in Boston who's more interested in the poor!"

"Yes, confound him—that's why he does so much mischief. Oh, I know the breed! He poses as a philanthropist, and thinks that if a man will live in one of his model tenements and patronize his cheap coffee-house, he ought to be contented with his lot. That's no way to help men—to rob them of their independence."

"But that's just what Mr. Lawrence doesn't do," said Baretta, eagerly. "His idea isn't charity, but practical assistance. He says that the men who have money ought to be ashamed to ask the rents they do for miserable rat-traps, and that if they offer the working-men decent homes they can get a fair return on their investment, which is all they have a right to expect."

"Oh, it's the old story. Do you recollect what I said the other night? That's the worst thing you can do for the working-man—make him content and get him to save up money, and all that sort of thing. Then he's on the side of society, and becomes a part of the monstrous injustice that we're trying to overthrow."

"Well, it seems to me that anything which makes the poor man more comfortable is to be encouraged as a step in the right direction."

To this argument Ditton made no reply. He threw his head back and gazed reflectively at the ceiling for a moment. "How did you get acquainted with Sibley Lawrence?" he asked, presently.

"At the Young Men's Social and Literary Association. I go there sometimes to get the books I want. Is there anything wrong in that?"

"Ah, yes—that's one of his philanthropic schemes."

"You talk as if you didn't approve of it."

"I don't."

"See here, Mr. Ditton," said Baretta, rising again and beginning to pace restlessly up and down. "I might as well tell you the whole story from beginning to end. I'm sorry if you dislike the Association, but it's better than the Public Library, in some respects, for a fellow who wants to read and study. They have all the magazines and reviews there, and a good many books, and you can get at them without any bother. A man I used to know at Jackson & Moore's took me there first. I don't care anything about the religious meetings, or the lectures on politics and literature, but you're not obliged to go to those. And it only costs two dollars a year to belong. Well, Mr. Lawrence takes a great interest in the Association, and he often looks in of an evening, and talks in a pleasant way to the young men who are there."

"Yes," interrupted Ditton. "Your real philanthropist is always mighty patronizing."

"He wasn't patronizing to me," said Baretta, sharply. "I don't like that sort of thing any better than you do. But we got into conversation once or twice, and he seemed to be interested in my ideas. After that he always spoke to me when he came in, and in that way we got to be pretty well acquainted."

"Oh, I see," said Ditton, with a dry laugh. "You have a faculty for getting on with the swells. Your father must have been a duke at least before he came to this country."

"You are unfair to me, Mr. Ditton," protested Baretta. "A man can't help his birth," he added, with an air which intimated that he might be descended even from princely stock.

Ditton lay back in his chair again and laughed aloud. "Oh, you amuse me!" he cried. "Why do you want to be a Socialist at all? Why don't you go back to the old country and claim your title?"

"You'll be sorry some day for talking to me like this," said Baretta, that livid scowl displaying itself between his eyes.

"Come, come, my boy, don't get mad. Go on and tell me about Lawrence."

"There's nothing to tell. One day he offered to lend me a book which wasn't in the Association library, and asked me to call at his house for it; and when I called he asked me in and talked with me there."

"And so you became a friend of the family. I thought the Lawrences were too proud to know any one who didn't come over in the *Mayflower*. But I suppose your title helped you." Ditton laughed again, and rose as if to go.

Baretta said nothing. His heart was afire with rage, and he was afraid that if he spoke he would lose all control of himself.

"Well, well, I beg your pardon," said Ditton, thrusting his big hands into his pockets, and strolling carelessly to the window. "Raining still, isn't it?" he continued, looking out. "Look here, Baretta, forgive and forget. I think a good deal of you, and I don't want to see you led astray by false lights. These people may take you up to amuse themselves, but they will drop you like a hot cake when they get tired of you. And

don't you make the mistake of thinking you can really interest them in our work. Why, man, it's like asking them to assist at their own destruction. As for Sibley Lawrence, he means well; but I don't like that kind. I suppose he wants to push you forward as a great prodigy from the ranks of us common people—discovered by him. Has he asked you to dinner yet to meet the big bugs of State Street, or the professors out at Harvard?"

"Mr. Lawrence has been very kind to me—so have all his family. If you don't like my idea of bringing our cause to the notice of those who at least are willing to listen to it, why, then, there's nothing more to be said. Only you have no right to charge me with treachery because I thought I could do some good in that way." Baretta spoke coldly enough; but there was still that burning sense of anger and indignation within him. Why had this man joined the conspiracy to crowd him to the wall? Was it because he was jealous of him—because he recognized in him a dangerous rival?

"Try your scheme if you like, Baretta. Only bear in mind that I warn you what will come of it. These new friends of yours are more likely to convert you than you are to convert them."

"You are down on me, Mr. Ditton, like the rest," said the young man, glowering at his visitor.

"Down on you? What are you talking about? There's no one down on you that I know of, unless it's Luck, and you must admit that he has some reason. But I see you don't want to talk to me any longer." Ditton reached for his hat and umbrella. "Come and see me when you've got over your mad," he added, with a quizzical smile.

Baretta made no effort to detain him. "I don't know why you should treat me in this way," he said, sullenly. He preceded Ditton to the door and opened it. "The entry is dark as usual. I'll go down with you. Mind that first step."

At the foot of the stairs Ditton stopped and held out his hand. "Well, well, you and I can't afford to quarrel. We've got enough to do to fight the enemy. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, and I don't want to interfere with your plans. If you think you can do any good by going to see Sibley Law-

rence, go by all means. But keep a level head on your shoulders—that's all."

"Oh, I may never meet any of them again," said Baretta, gloomily. "They don't care for me—I know that well enough."

"Well, well!" Ditton opened the front door, and held out his hand again. "Keep up your courage; all these things will be set right some day."

Baretta, peering out into the blackness, heard his departing footsteps echoing along the silent street. This young man was still in anything but an amiable mood. He resented bitterly Ditton's counsel, which seemed to him to have been influenced by purely selfish motives. Small minds, he argued, were always envious of great. There was a time when he had been content to follow the Socialist preacher implicitly. But now he felt that he was too well able to make his own way in the world to follow any one. In any case it was absurd and unjust for Ditton to suspect his motives—to assume that he was ready to desert to the other side. He repudiated the idea that he had been patronized by Mr. Lawrence; if there had been any patronizing it was on Ditton's part. "Come, come, my boy, don't get mad!" He recalled his visitor's words with the conviction that they were intended to imply superiority. He would not be addressed as "my boy" again—as if he were a petulant child that had to be soothed. Was he not conscious of powers stirring within him which would some day make him known and respected of all men? And was an obscure Socialist orator—a man who had only been a country parson—to try to dictate to him? The people at Mrs. Chilton's had recognized his importance at once. He had forgotten for the time those feelings of humiliation which his experiences with them had at first engendered.

"Why, Maud!" Baretta started back in surprise as he saw the girl standing before him. In his absorption he had not observed her approach.

"Let me pass, please!" she said. Her voice sounded hoarsely, and in the darkness her face, which she now lifted to his, seemed as white as the face of one who is dead.

"You are dripping wet. Why have you been out in this storm?" He stepped back to allow her to enter the door.

To this question she made no answer. But as she hurried by he put out a detaining arm.

"Maud! What is the matter? Why won't you speak to me?"

"Let me go!" She twitched herself free from his grasp and vanished up the narrow stairway.

CHAPTER VIII

MILDRED IS DOUBTFUL

PERHAPS the most striking characteristic of the sex misnamed the gentler, or weaker, is inconsistency. Vergil's "*varium et mutabile semper*" has been taken to mean that it is always a woman's prerogative to change her mind; if so, she exercises it to the full. Mildred Lawrence, after telling Philip that she could never forgive him, went home and wondered if he would ever forgive her. She did not for a moment admit that she had deceived him as to the true state of her feelings; indeed, she felt that she had been quite too frank in letting him understand that, although everything was over between them, her love was not yet a thing of the past. But she kept thinking of his declaration that she had been a little hard with him, and wondering if indeed she was to blame in that respect. She had been very indignant with him for disappointing that ideal conception of his character which she had once cherished; she was still too young to accept as inevitable the process of disillusion which comes some time to all women regarding the men they love. The attachment between these two young people had not been of sudden growth. They had known each other from childhood. The Lawrences had come from Lexington, too, although Sibley Lawrence and his family spent little time there. The old homestead was about a mile beyond the Yates house, on the Concord Road, and it was at present occupied by Alfred Lawrence, a bachelor cousin of Sibley's—a man of fifty, who did not keep up much of an establishment nor do anything to entertain the neighbourhood, but contented himself with having a male friend or two down from the city now and then. But in

Mildred's younger days, when Alfred was abroad—there was a mysterious gap in his life during which this was practically the sole fact known concerning him—Sibley Lawrence had spent several successive summers in Lexington, and thus the intimacy between the Lawrences and the Yateses grew and flourished. That Mildred and Philip would some day marry was taken for granted long before there was anything like a definite engagement between them. For a time they drifted apart, especially during the years of the young man's residence at Cambridge. This was not because there was any conscious estrangement; up to this time, indeed, there had been no conscious love-making. Mildred was hardly more than a child when Philip entered Harvard; at the time of his graduation she was just about to emerge from that conventional nursery in which young girls are supposed to exist until society has formally made their acquaintance. His Class Day was one of the first functions of any consequence that she had been permitted to attend. After this his attentions to her began to take on a definite meaning. Neither could have told precisely how it happened, but some three years later the engagement between them was announced.

Hitherto affairs had run so smoothly with them that no one who knew them would have predicted what afterwards happened. The match, as all the relatives on both sides said, was obviously suitable. The Yateses were not so wealthy as the Lawrences, but Philip would have enough, with what Sibley Lawrence would undoubtedly settle upon his only child, to get along very comfortably. The house at Lexington would belong to him when his father died; and then Mildred's father would undoubtedly expect the young people to spend at least a part of each winter with him in Boston, in the handsome old-fashioned mansion in Mount Vernon Street. Besides, Philip was such a brilliant fellow—everybody admitted that. To be sure, his career at Cambridge had been rather disappointing, and he had abandoned his legal studies as uncongenial; but then, many young men find it difficult to make up their minds at the start. Mildred herself made these excuses for him at first; but by-and-by she recognized the fact that they were mere evasions, and that the great things he had promised to do were as far

from being done as ever. After his father's death Philip's course seemed to become more irresolute than ever. Perhaps the possession of an assured income was not an unmixed blessing in his case. He took the rooms in Livingstone Place, and devoted himself to the mysterious pursuit of literature—with what results we have already seen. Although the house in Lexington was his he went there very little, it being understood that his mother should have the use of it during her life. His two sisters had incomes provided for them out of Mr. Yates's personal estate; and as one of them was married, and the other soon to be married, there was no cause for anxiety concerning their future. Thus there was no spur beyond personal ambition to prick the side of Philip's intent. Mildred Lawrence had not yet told him that she despised him as an idler who would never accomplish anything worth accomplishing. Yet this was finally what she said one day in an exasperated mood—that day when they quarrelled and separated forever. Of course she had not meant to be so severe as all that. But his indifference, his way of laughing at her indignation over his failure to fulfil her expectations, had exasperated her thoroughly; and so she had used that word "despise" to him. Then in a moment all was over between them. Philip, usually so equable, grew furious at the taunt. Ah, she could hardly recall his words now; it seemed only a moment until she had found herself alone and in tears, and had heard the door closing behind him. Then there had been a cold note from her to him breaking off the engagement, and a colder one from him to her accepting her decision. Under any other circumstances the young man might not have yielded so quickly. But that word "despise" rankled in his heart; if she had ever loved him she could not have said it. And Mildred herself felt quite as strongly that reconciliation was impossible. Perhaps she had not quite meant to say that she despised him. She was none the less intensely dissatisfied with his failure to achieve any of those things which she felt that he was capable of achieving; and she was piqued because her influence over him apparently amounted to so little. She did not think that this realization of his faults was any disparagement of her affection for him, although he chose to take it

that way. All that happened a year ago, and she knew that she loved him still—not rapturously or passionately, perhaps, not as they love in plays and novels, but with a constant tenderness of sorrowful recollection. Now, however, she was regretting that confession to him under the trees in Commonwealth Avenue. He would take it amiss—indeed, had she not seen that he had done so? He could not understand why she should still love him and yet not be able to forgive him. Well, possibly she could hardly understand it herself. And yet down deep in her heart she felt that it was the truth, and that her resolution was a wise one. The time might come when she could look more leniently upon the folly of a wasted career; but she could never forget her disappointment, and the remembrance would have embittered all their future. It is its irrevocableness that makes a tragedy of life.

There was one person who thought that this quarrel was an exceedingly absurd one. The relatives on both sides had been shocked, and had protested; but finding both Philip and Mildred resolute, and having affairs of their own to interest them, they had come to the sensible resolution that it was none of their business, after all. If Sibley Lawrence didn't interfere, why should any one else? But Daisy Tredwell still clung to the idea of a reconciliation. If two people cared for each other, she thought, they were dreadfully foolish to let a mere whim separate them. Daisy admired Philip Yates immensely. She didn't care whether he was brilliant or not; she was sure that he was a man of whom any girl might be proud. She did not hesitate to tell Mildred so, and to scold her for treating him so harshly. "Your notions are altogether too lofty," Daisy said.

Mildred bore with Daisy's gibes in patience; but she did not confide in her—on this subject, at least—although she was very fond of her. She said nothing to her this afternoon of having met Philip.

"I thought I would run in just for a moment," said Daisy, "though it is almost five o'clock, and I ought to be getting home."

"I'm glad you didn't come earlier. I have just been making calls. It's a relief to think that summer is almost here."

"Oh, I don't mind when people have afternoons, and one doesn't have to spend all one's time talking to those one goes to see." She looked at Mildred curiously, with her head drooping slightly towards her right shoulder—a characteristic attitude of hers. "Do you know," she said, after a pause, "you are the queerest girl in the world!"

"If I don't, it isn't because I have never been told so. What have I done to vex you now?"

"I wouldn't say 'vex;' that would mean that I am angry. Suppose I say that you have annoyed me."

Mildred leaned back in her chair and smiled at the earnest little face before her, framed in its tangled aureole of gold-red hair. "Well, Daisy," she asked, "why don't you tell me what it's all about?"

Miss Tredwell examined the handle of her parasol intently for a moment, then looked up suddenly. "Why have you taken up Mr. Baretta?" she demanded.

The unexpectedness of this question brought a sudden colour to Mildred's cheeks. "It will be my turn to be annoyed if you talk like that. I don't know what you mean by such a remark."

"Come, Mildred, don't try to humbug me. I say you have taken him up. Would Mrs. Chilton ever have asked him to come and see her if it hadn't been for you?"

"She met Mr. Baretta here," said Mildred, with great dignity. "But it was papa who asked him—not I. Papa says he is a remarkably intelligent young man."

"He may be intelligent, but he doesn't know how to behave. Why, you ought to have seen him when he came into the room at Mrs. Chilton's. He was even afraid of me. Fancy that!" And Daisy laughed.

"I don't see anything strange in that; you're a dangerous person, you know."

"Well, but everything showed that he was—not a gentleman."

"You are very unkind, Daisy," said Mildred.

"Oh, I suppose it's a mean thing to say. But isn't it true?" Daisy fixed her bright blue eyes on her friend as she spoke, with a look of challenge.

"No—I don't think it is."

"Ah, but if he were a gentleman there would be no thinking about it. You would know at once."

"What has prejudiced you so against Mr. Baretta, Daisy?"

"Only himself." Daisy laughed as she said this, and then went on with great earnestness, "No, don't think it's prejudice, Mildred. I'm willing to allow something to your odd ideas of doing good in the world, and all that. Your father is so dreadfully charitable that I dare say you inherit it from him. But I am positive that Mr. Baretta isn't honest or sincere, and that you will both regret ever having had anything to do with him."

"Daisy, you are too absurdly unjust!" cried Mildred. "I will not allow you to talk like that. You have no reason for your suspicions."

"Oh, I know that. But instinct is often better than reason. He's not a gentleman."

"But people who are not gentlemen can be honest."

"Not if they pretend that they are gentlemen," said Daisy, with an air of triumph over the irrefutable nature of her logic. "And Mrs. Chilton says that he told you he was a Hungarian of noble family."

"Oh no—he has said nothing to me on the subject at all. I think that papa has gathered something of the sort from chance remarks of his. And I'm sure, Daisy, I think it's very nice of him to be so unassuming."

"You are perfectly ridiculous, Mildred. Noble family!"

"Well, his father was a refugee at the time of the revolution. Mr. Baretta has said that much, and I believe him."

"Oh, so do I. Don't think I would dispute that. I wonder whether it was the sheriff or the hangman that he took refuge from."

"Daisy!" cried Mildred, sharply.

"Yes, get angry with me, do!" said Daisy, with a little mocking laugh. "A rude, scowling, unknown foreigner is worth quarrelling over, isn't he?"

"There!" said Mildred, trying to smile herself, but not succeeding very well. "Let us agree to say no more about it. I am not so much interested in Mr. Baretta that I can talk of nothing else—as you seem to be."

"Oh, you amuse me when you try to be disagreeable. It isn't in you." Daisy went over to her friend and gave her a friendly squeeze. "You haven't a bad temper, like mine, and a tongue that is always saying things it ought not to say."

After Daisy had gone, however, Mildred thought of this conversation more than once. It was strange, indeed, that it should make any particular impression upon her. Everybody knew that Daisy was a great chatterer and full of all sorts of fancies. Perhaps it was because some instinct told her that her friend was right in saying that Baretta was not a gentleman. She had herself observed his ignorance of social usages, but had tried to excuse him by bearing in mind such facts in his career as he had imparted to her. She felt how difficult the struggle must have been, and this feeling tempered either resentment or amusement at his mistakes. Still she recalled, now that the question came definitely before her, more than one instance in which he had said things it was hard to think that a man of good birth would say or do, no matter under what stress of circumstances he had been placed. She was a little indignant even yet as she remembered how he had asked her at Mrs. Chilton's if she came because she knew he was to be there. Yes, it might be that Daisy was shrewder than she in reading this strange young man's character. Her father had a very good opinion of him, and possibly she was influenced by this, although she recognized her father's general attitude towards the world, which was that of absent-minded good-nature, as interfering slightly with his competence as a judge. No one could answer a question of the sort more effectively than he if it were put to him directly; but he was too constantly in an abstracted mood to put any questions to himself. He thought Baretta was a promising young fellow, who deserved better opportunities than he had hitherto enjoyed, and it was a part of his general philanthropy to give him those opportunities so far as he could. When he asked Baretta to stay to dinner it was because he wanted to talk with him—to draw him out, to give his intellectual nature a chance to expand. Of course he thought that this Socialistic crusade in which the young man had enlisted was all nonsense. But in his large-hearted tolerance he could content himself with only a vague protest against even

Socialism. It was a foolish theory, no doubt, but it wasn't likely to do much harm. The thing to do was to get this apostle of the new creed interested in something else. It was for this reason that he had taken pains to have him meet Mrs. Chilton, of whose position in the world of literature he had perhaps an exaggerated idea. Mr. Lawrence was a cultivated man, but he was too busy with his humanitarian schemes to know much about modern authors. He used to say that Fielding and Swift, Addison and Pope, were contemporaries of his. Yet it was characteristic of him that his house should be one of the very few among the "best houses" where people like Mrs. Chilton—people who wrote or painted or acted for a living—could be met on terms of equality. There was no Mrs. Lawrence to institute a "salon"—Mildred's mother would have had a horror of such an institution if she had been alive—but in a casual fashion people with something more than birth or money to commend them were made welcome at the fine old house in Mount Vernon Street, and Mildred grew up without those prejudices of exclusiveness which so many of her friends inherited. They thought she was "the queerest girl in the world," although not for the same reason that Daisy Tredwell did.

Mildred was well enough acquainted with her father's peculiarities to know that the question which she asked him that evening would quite take him aback; nevertheless some potent impulse urged her to ask it.

"Papa," she said, thoughtfully, "do you think Mr. Baretta is a gentleman?"

"Eh? What?" cried Mr. Lawrence, looking at her in astonishment. They two were dining together, which was something that did not happen very often. It was impossible for Mr. Lawrence to resist inviting the most unexpected people at all sorts of times and on all sorts of occasions.

"I mean, do you believe that he was ever really the son of some Hungarian count or prince, as he says?"

"Well, Mildred," said her father, with a rather disturbed expression, "it's singular that you should think of such a question as that. To tell the truth, the young man has never said anything about it, one way or the other. I only know what—what he has

implied in his conversation. Ah, I must ask him to give an account of himself."

"Oh!" said Mildred, with a little cry of dismay, "I didn't mean to make you think I doubted his word."

"Not at all, my dear; not at all," said Mr. Lawrence, blandly. "Only one can't be too careful, you know, in making acquaintances, especially with foreigners." And it never occurred to him that, as a father, he might have recognized this important truth before.

CHAPTER IX

BARETTA IS CONFIDENT

SEVERAL weeks passed away before Philip Yates saw Baretta again. Once or twice he wondered vaguely what had become of him, but it must be confessed that he did not care very much. A man must be an ass, he thought, to talk as Baretta had talked at their last meeting. What perplexed him most was how Mildred Lawrence could tolerate such a fellow. It was just like her father to pick up all sorts of odd acquaintances; but surely he need not introduce them to his daughter. The explanation occurred to him that possibly Baretta might have exaggerated the degree of intimacy which he enjoyed, and this gave him a melancholy consolation. Philip felt that he was in need of consolation of some sort. He was not the man to mope or to complain to others; but youth does not readily bear its burdens with the silent patience characteristic of age. If he could not talk about the pain which was gnawing his bosom, he would have liked, nevertheless, to have some one understand without talking how bitter it was. No doubt the Spartan boy was sustained by the belief that his heroism would not pass unwept, unhonoured, and unsung. Philip, however, had no friend of either sex to give him tacit sympathy at this crisis. He had fallen out of the way of confiding in his mother or his sisters; the knowledge that they thought his career a failure made this impossible; and in any case a man does not say much to his relatives about his love affairs, because their attitude is pretty sure to be one of disapproval. They had liked Mildred and had felt that it was a very suitable match; but when she broke it off they were very angry with her. Mrs. Yates had even said

that she had hoped she would never see the girl or hear her name again. Perhaps the fact that she recognized the justice of Mildred's feeling about Philip made her all the more angry. It was obvious, therefore, that she would not have much patience with her son for cherishing the folly of loving Mildred still. As for other women there were few with whom Philip was on intimate terms. He was a more or less frequent visitor at the houses of several young married women who were not so devoted to their husbands as to find no enjoyment in the companionship of other men sufficiently good-looking and agreeable; but these acquaintances were too superficial to admit of any sentiment more serious than elusive and flattering homage. Besides, what woman cares to be told by a man how much he admires another? Women are sometimes made victims in this way, and then they retaliate by compelling their tormentor to transfer his affections to them. The men whom Philip knew best, too, had never been made the recipients of his confidence as to his personal concerns. He had a frankness of manner which made him popular with them, but this did not interfere with his capacity for keeping his own secrets. It was known, of course, that he had been engaged to Miss Lawrence, but speculations upon the cause of their separation were not broached in his presence. And thus he bore his hurt in silence.

Of course, if Philip had been a hero, he would have achieved some great feat of mental prowess at this particular juncture, and convinced Mildred of the injustice of her treatment of him; and then she would have been repentant and sorrowful, and he would have been magnanimous and forgiving. But events in these days seem to have some difficulty in attaining heroic size, however large one's ambitions may be. Cleverness of one sort or another is so common that even genius is depressed by it. "Go where glory waits thee," is brave advice; but suppose one looks in every direction and doesn't discover glory waiting anywhere? Philip knew that he had a certain amount of talent, but he saw no way of exercising it that would make him famous. Even signed articles in the magazines confer only a limited distinction. Then he laughed at his own folly in assuming that anything he could do would win back Mildred now. She had seen very

clearly what a worthless fellow he was. Perhaps she might come to think better of him some day, but there would still be the memory of his bitter words, which she had said she could never forgive, to separate them. Ah, why should he persist in the folly of loving her? This was a question which he often asked himself, and he could only answer it by saying that love was a wholly involuntary emotion.

The worst of it was that he was justifying Mildred's reproaches by an utterly idle and vacuous mode of life. It was hardly an excuse to say that success was beyond his reach, or that since he was parted from her it had no charms for him. The casuistry of such an argument was only too obvious. Nevertheless, he kept postponing the task of making a break, as he called it. Perhaps he would have more energy when autumn came. It was all nonsense for a man to make a slave of himself during the hot weather, when he could just as well take a long holiday. Philip was in perfect health, but he began to persuade himself that his physical rather than his intellectual system needed bracing. He was confirmed in this belief when the editor of the *Mail* wrote him a note saying that his last batch of reviews hardly came up to the mark. If he couldn't do hack work like that something must indeed be wrong with him. It was on a warm evening early in June when he got this note. He had gone to his rooms after a pull on the river to dress for dinner, and in the intervals of his leisurely toilet he reflected upon the editor's decision, and was more than ever convinced that he needed a change. He would get away from everything and everybody; he would go where he could find some sort of excitement. It was in this frame of mind that he issued forth into Livingstone Place, where the first person he saw, standing on the pavement directly before the door, was Baretta.

"Oh, were you coming to see me?" asked Philip. The young men had not parted last on very good terms, but Philip was not a man to cherish resentments. Besides, in his present mood almost any one's companionship was preferable to being alone.

Baretta looked confused. "No—not exactly. I—I was just strolling about."

"You were the last man I expected to see."

"Why?" Baretta gave a laugh in which there was not much merriment. "Well, I suppose I am off my beat," he added. "I belong in the slums."

"See here, Baretta, I wish you'd cut all that. I don't know whether you want to quarrel with me, or what you mean, but I am going to be so confoundedly good-natured that you can't do it."

"Quarrel with you? I assure you I had no such idea. I was only afraid you would forget the difference in our station." Baretta drew down the corners of his mouth as he spoke, and the ominous scowl which was so characteristic of his face even in moments of abstraction gathered between his eyes.

Philip made a mental note of the fact that Baretta was more of an ass than he had supposed, and then reflected that if he wanted diversion here was his opportunity. He was coming actually to dislike this young man, and yet he was conscious of an indefinable feeling of interest in him. Was this because he associated him in his mind with Mildred Lawrence? Surely such an association must be productive rather of pain than of pleasure. But whatever the reason, he paid no heed to this taunt. "Come along and dine with me," was what he said.

"Oh, I—I can't," stammered Baretta, rather taken aback by this proffer of hospitality in response to his rude speech.

"Nonsense—I want to have a talk with you. I sha'n't ask you again; I am going away from Boston in a few days."

"For good?" The frown gave way to something like a smile as Baretta asked this question.

"You look as if you wanted me to say yes. But although I won't quarrel with you I can't be quite so obliging as all that. Come over to the club."

"Well, you are very kind," said Baretta, rather awkwardly. "I didn't suppose they let outsiders in."

Philip stared at him. "Oh, you are my guest," he said. "I dare say you'll be such a celebrity before long that one will have to speak for you a week ahead."

"Oh no—not quite that. But my plans are coming on very well—very well indeed." There was a note of triumphant sat-

isfaction in his voice which Philip could not very well resent, although somehow he fancied that his companion regarded him as one of the conquered.

"Ah," he said, dryly, "you and Mrs. Chilton have got on well together."

"Mrs. Chilton has gone to Europe, but I have other friends left."

"No doubt. Don't you enjoy a walk across the Common at this time of year and this time of day?"

"Oh yes, very pretty. As I was saying," went on Baretta, raising his voice, and seeming actually to swell physically with a sense of his own importance, "I have been getting on remarkably well. I find the city ripe for Socialism to a surprising extent, and in the most unexpected quarters."

Philip laughed. "That's to be the new fad, is it?"

"Fad? What do you mean by fad? Why should you call it that? If you think I'm not in earnest you're very much mistaken."

"My dear fellow, I don't dispute your earnestness for a moment. It's the others I am thinking about."

"You're just like Ditton. He doesn't think I can do any good among the upper classes—as they call themselves."

"Well, candidly, I agree with Ditton. Just think what you're doing, Baretta. You're asking them to assist at their own destruction."

"On the contrary, I am trying to save them. If they see what Socialism really means they may take a friendly and reasonable attitude towards it before it is too late."

"Oh, I see; it's a flag of truce that you carry." Philip laughed again. "Don't think I wish to discourage you. But make your hay while you can and try to be content with a light crop."

When they sat down to dinner at the Pilgrim Club—they had a small table by the window, and between them were two long candlesticks with tiny red shades, reflecting with a cheerful glow the soft light from the burning tapers, which mingled pleasantly with the fading light of day—Baretta gave Philip a rapid outline of his plans. It was, of course, too late in the

season to do much now ; through the summer he would stick to his old work at the Socialist meetings and in the slums. But Mrs. Chilton had encouraged the idea of his giving lectures in the autumn, and had said she would speak about it to all her friends. And a man whom he had met at her house, Mr. Allen, wanted him to come out to Brookline and talk to the Tuesday Afternoon Club. Of course Yates had heard of Orrin Fox Allen. And then there was the Zola Society—those people would be interested in Socialism from the realistic point of view. Oh, there would be a great field for missionary efforts, Baretta thought.

"I shall have to come and hear you," said Philip, smiling. "Don't you care for claret? What will you have?"

Baretta was not devoted to the pleasures of the table—which was fortunate for one who so seldom enjoyed them—and he answered truly enough that he did not care. He added that he never drank wine.

"Oh, well, I will send for a bottle of Apollinaris. You don't miss much in refusing this," said Philip, setting down his glass. "I don't see why a decent claret need be quite so hard to get in this country. They'll be wanting to make you a member of the Zola Society, you know, Baretta. Socialism will just suit them."

"I should not join," said the young man promptly, taking this remark seriously. "I can do my work best as an outsider. Mr. Lawrence thinks that. Oh!" he added, turning red, "I—I beg your pardon."

Philip, too, changed colour, but he faced without wincing the awkward situation produced by Baretta's blunder and his inexcusable lack of tact in aggravating it. "Ah, I suppose you mean Sibley Lawrence," he said, blandly. "I didn't fancy that he would go in for Socialism."

"He doesn't," said Baretta. It surprised him that Yates should be willing to talk about the Lawrences in this way ; he had been anticipating an angry protest at this chance mention of Mr. Lawrence's name. It will be seen that Baretta's conceptions of the character of a gentleman were still somewhat inadequate. "That is," he went on, "he thinks that I go too

far. But he believes that some things in the present social structure are radically wrong, and that it can do people no harm to hear the extreme view. 'I want them to believe about a quarter part of what you say'—that's the way he puts it."

"They will believe more than that—at first."

"If they think that we are not in earnest they will find out their mistake," declared Baretta. "But I have still another opening, and I wanted to ask your advice about that. I met Mr. Binney, the editor of the *Mail*, a few days ago, and he suggested a series of articles on Socialism."

"Oh, write them, by all means," said Philip. He did not think it necessary to add that he himself had suggested writing a similar series, and had been told by Binney that the public was not interested in that sort of thing. But he could not help thinking that this young man seemed destined to be an unconscious rival of his at every step, and he was aware of a curiously impersonal desire to know how the rivalry would end.

"Yes, I think I might do that," said Baretta, complacently.

Philip smiled again rather bitterly, and led the conversation to other subjects. But when, an hour later, his guest took his leave, excusing himself on the plea of an engagement for the evening, he recurred to Binney's proposition, and told Baretta that it was a great opening for him. "I don't mean that you will make many converts," he said, "but that it will be an immense advantage for you personally. And when you get your chance don't throw it away; as I have done."

"Oh, you!" exclaimed Baretta, turning in the doorway and looking back at him. "You don't need to have chances."

"Do you think so?" Philip reflected a moment, as if the question were really a very grave one. "Well, that's very lucky for me," he added. "Good-night, Baretta. Come and see me in the fall."

Baretta turned the corner by the Pilgrim Club and ascended the hill in the direction of Mount Vernon Street with a swelling sense of his own superiority to the rest of the world. Here was Yates, one of the men whom he had envied, actually envying him. Yates was a mighty good fellow, of course, even if now and then he was unconsciously patronizing, but he was not brilliant; and

if he had had to make his own way in the world he would hardly have commended himself to the notice of Mr. Lawrence and Mrs. Chilton and the editor of the *Mail*.

Mr. Lawrence was at home, the grave man-servant told him when he rang the bell at the house in Mount Vernon Street. After waiting a moment in the reception-room at the left of the hall he was bidden to come up-stairs to the library. Here he found that gentleman, sitting at a capacious mahogany table which occupied the centre of the room.

"Ah, Mr. Baretta," he said, looking up. "Pardon me a moment while I finish this note. Take that chair—you will find it more comfortable."

"Perhaps I disturb you," said the young man, hesitating.

"Oh no—not at all." The pen scratched over the paper a minute longer; then the writer folded the note and addressed it. "Now, my dear sir, I am quite at your service."

"I only came for the book you were going to lend me—*The French Revolution*, you know."

"Ah, yes—Carlyle. You'll find him picturesque, but you must take what he says with a grain of salt." Mr. Lawrence rose and selected the volumes from the case. "There they are; you needn't hurry about returning them. But don't go—I should like to have a little chat with you. Have you decided to give those lectures?"

"Yes, sir, if you think best."

"Don't put the responsibility upon me," said Mr. Lawrence, smiling. "You might fail, and then you would blame me for it."

"Oh, I don't think I shall fail."

"Well, well, confidence is the main thing, after all. I don't mean to doubt your success."

"There is another matter I want to tell you about, sir," Baretta continued. "The *Mail* has made me an offer to write a series of articles on Socialism."

"Indeed! A very good idea of Binney's. Do you know him?"

"He asked me—personally. I met him at Mr. Allen's—Mr. Orrin Fox Allen."

"I see, I see." Mr. Lawrence gazed reflectively at the ceil-

ing a moment, and then added: "I think you will get on, Mr. Baretta; yes, I think you will get on."

"I am glad to have your approval, sir—yours and your daughter's."

"Ah!" Mr. Lawrence recalled at this point his conversation with Mildred about Baretta's antecedents, and looked at the young man a little less genially than before. "You have spoken to her about this?"

"No, sir."

"She goes away to-morrow—I dare say you will not see her again. But I shall be very pleased to tell her of your good-fortune."

Baretta did not receive this news with a joyful countenance. To be sure, he did not see her very often, but he felt as if her absence would somehow make a great difference to him. "Where does she go?" he asked.

"Oh, to Beverly, as usual; we have a house there." But Mr. Lawrence did not add, "You must come and see us," as Baretta was insanelly hoping that he might. Indeed, it seemed to the young man as if he turned the conversation into another channel rather abruptly by asking, "Do you still keep up those Sunday meetings on the Common?"

"Yes, sir, but I haven't been much of late. That is Mr. Ditton's field of work."

"And you and he follow different lines, eh?"

"He doesn't believe in the lectures at all. But one could hardly expect that he would. He is a—rather rough sort of person, don't you know?"

"Ah! I had supposed he was an educated man. He is—or was—a clergyman, I believe."

Baretta coloured, and wondered if this were meant for a reproof. "Of course I did not mean to prejudice you against him, Mr. Lawrence."

"By-the-way, Mr. Baretta," Mr. Lawrence began suddenly, ignoring this last remark, "you have never told me much of anything about yourself."

"About myself?" asked the young man, flushing again. "Oh, well—there isn't much to tell."

"Your father was a Hungarian, you once said. I suppose he came over here at the time of the trouble in 1848."

"Yes, sir, yes—that was it," answered Baretta, with an eagerness which struck his listener as rather odd. "There were complications—of a political nature."

"I see, I see. He must have known Kossuth and Görgei and the rest of them."

"I—I dare say he did. He never talked much to me about the—about those matters. It was when he was quite young—long before I was born."

"His experiences must have been most interesting. But his family—did he not communicate with them afterwards? I had the impression that there was an estate involved—I don't recall now exactly how I obtained it."

"Oh yes, something of the sort—I never understood myself. There were family complications, and some doubt about the—
the succession."

"There was a title involved?" Baretta said nothing, and Mr. Lawrence took his silence to mean assent. "Well, you ought to go over and look into it. There would be no difficulty now. It is too bad that your father did not live to see Austria and Hungary reconciled."

"Yes—it is," said Baretta. The turn which the conversation was taking made him very uneasy. He was willing that people should cherish exaggerated ideas of his family connections, but still he wanted to be able to say that he never indulged in direct untruths on this point. He had been obliged to draw upon his imagination in calling his father a political refugee. That, however, was a comparatively venial falsehood; nor was he responsible for the inferences of other people.

At this moment the door opened suddenly and Mildred came into the room. "Oh, papa—" she began. Then she saw Baretta, and blushed, and stopped short. "I beg your pardon for being so abrupt; I thought you were alone. How do you do, Mr. Baretta?" she added, turning to the visitor.

Baretta rose and extended his hand before he observed that she had not extended hers. He dropped it to his side instantly, with a bitter pang of humiliation. She was no longer going to

be kind to him—was that it? Who had been prejudicing her against him? For a moment he thought of Yates; but that was clearly absurd. He felt certain, however, that some adverse influence was at work.

"Your father tells me you are going away," he murmured, unconsciously clenching his fist.

"Oh yes," said Mildred. "It is quite time to be out of the city. We have had several very hot days already."

"Some of us manage to live through them just the same," cried Baretta, bitterly.

Mr. Lawrence and his daughter both looked at him when he said this with an expression of astonishment. In the moment of silence which followed Baretta wished that the earth would swallow him. Now he had indeed offended her forever.

"It's a notion—of course it's a notion," said Mr. Lawrence. "I will come to you in the drawing-room in a minute, Mildred. Yes, yes—one can be quite comfortable here in Boston."

"I—I must be going," stammered Baretta, reaching out for his hat. Then his eyes met Mildred's with an appealing glance. "Good-bye," he said.

"Good-bye, Mr. Baretta." But she did not even then offer to shake hands with him, nor did she say anything about his coming to see her in the autumn.

CHAPTER X

"NO ONE WILL EVER LOVE YOU AS I DO"

THE day had been intensely hot, as days in June often are, and even after the sun had gone down the dusty pavements and the close brick walls seemed to reflect its burning rays. In Aragon Street doors and windows were flung wide open; and from them issued blasts of warm air, mingled with the sickening odours of refuse in the primary stages of decay. It was Sunday evening, and the women had let the dirty dishes accumulate in the kitchen sink unwashed, where the buzzing of flies, no less than the stench, attested their presence. Some of these women were now sitting in the doorways or leaning out of the windows—their coarse red arms bared to the elbows and their gowns in various stages of disarrangement. Many of the younger ones had gone, attired in cheap finery which added to their discomfort and emphasized their unattractiveness alike to nose and eye, to stroll slowly eastward in the direction of the Common, and the more fortunate among them were riding westward with their "fellers" in the open cars in the direction of Franklin Park. These young men, too, would not have commended themselves to persons of delicate perceptions. Their faces were red, and constant streams of perspiration had made them greasy. They had generally discarded their waistcoats or had put on thin ones in various stages of soilage; and as collars were uncomfortable they had dispensed with those useless adornments, and had tucked handkerchiefs of a suspicious hue about their reeking necks. The men who stayed at home—for the most part fathers of families—and smoked dirty clay pipes or chewed tobacco, sitting in groups about the door-steps, had neither coats nor

waistcoats to encumber them, their sole concession to the proprieties of the day being a brassy-looking stud in the neckband of the shirt.

Peter Dolan was one of these. He had left the shelter of his own vine and fig-tree and was visiting his next-door neighbour, Finnerty, who was also employed in the iron works at South Boston. He could hear the shrill voices of his own younger children, and when they grew too loud, or when quarrelling reached the acute stage of fisticuffs, he was able to restore a semblance of order by a few loud oaths. Mrs. Dolan sat in the darkness within the doorway, but her protests had little effect. It was only when she threatened to send them all to bed that they paid any attention to her, and her failure to execute the threat soon robbed it of its terrors. On the same principle, Dolan's oaths were frequent enough to lose their force. But he had a way of laying about him with his fists that was very unpleasant, and when he was only a single door away the contingency of his doing so could not be considered a remote one.

"So it's ordered out we all are in the mornin', Dolan," said Finnerty.

Dolan plastered the extreme edge of the curb with a generous supply of tobacco-juice before he spoke. "Yes, dom 'em!" he said at last, gruffly.

"It's hard whin a poor man has to give up his job loike that."

"They'd been afther lockin' us out next wake if we hadn't struck this, Finnerty. Don't ye make no mistake about that."

"That's what Luck says, I know, but the boss has allus been a fair man to me—I'll say that fer him."

"Och, you haven't no gumption!" said Dolan, contemptuously. "Phwat the divvle do we care for the boss? It's him that's ready to turn us out and put in a lot of dom scabs fer the sake of twinty-five cints a day. Let him go to hell—that's what I am afther sayin'."

"That don't help a poor man to pay the rint," persisted Finnerty, doggedly.

"Luck 'll look afther that, my bhoys. Ain't it the juty of the Union to support the mimbers whin they are shtandin' up fer

their rights? Wut's a Union fer if it ain't? That's wut I'd loike to know."

"If they'll only kape it up. Whin a poor man's lost his job—"

"Dom you, Finnerty!" cried Dolan. "Yer haven't the courage av a flea. Them fellers 'll have to give in to us evenchooly. It's allus the way."

"Well, well!" murmured Finnerty, feebly. He knew that he was getting the worst of the argument, but nevertheless he could not share Dolan's cheerful confidence that the owners of the works would give in. He mopped his face with a red handkerchief much the worse for wear, and looked vaguely down the dusty street. "Here comes Mr. Baretta," he said, presently.

"Dom him, too!" cried Dolan, fiercely. "He's one of them as is agin us."

"Wut makes ye think that, Dolan?"

"If it's not belavin' me ye'd be, ask Luck." Dolan once more directed a volley at the curb, and then nodded in a surly fashion as Baretta came up.

"So the strike's on, is it?" asked the young man. "Good-evening, Mr. Finnerty."

"Yes, sir, we wint out yisterday afthernoon," said Finnerty, seeing that Dolan obviously intended to make no reply.

"Well, I'm sorry for it, to tell the truth."

"Who cares whether ye're sorry or not?" growled Dolan, without looking up.

"Not you, at any rate," retorted Baretta. "But a good many of the strikers will have reason to feel sorry before the thing is over. And so will their families."

"You lave my family alone! I can take care of 'em myself."

"Perhaps you can," observed Baretta, with a sneer; "but you don't—not when you go into a strike of this sort at the order of a scoundrel like Luck."

"You can talk moighty big—you can!"

"Well, I sha'n't talk about this strike now—it's too late for that. It's none of my affair anyway." He waited a moment, and, when neither of the men made any further remark, added,

"You won't succeed—remember what I say." Then he went on and entered Dolan's door, stumbling over the children on the steps.

Mrs. Dolan was still sitting in the entry, and the young man stopped to speak to her. "I'm sorry about this strike," he said. But Mrs. Dolan merely shook her head and groaned. There was some one sitting on the stairs, and as Baretta turned to go up this person silently rose to let him pass. It was Maud.

"Oh!" exclaimed Baretta, rather awkwardly, looking at her. He hesitated a moment. "Won't you come a little ways with me?" he asked at last.

Maud shook her head in silence.

"Do," said Mrs. Dolan. "It'll do ye good afther bein' hived up here all day. I'd go myself if I wa'n't so fat."

There was another pause, during which Baretta continued to look at the girl entreatingly. "Oh, well!" she cried at last, petulantly, "I suppose I must. Wait till I get my hat."

"Let us go towards Park Square," said Baretta, as they came out upon the pavement. "It isn't far, and we can take a car there for Chestnut Hill."

"I don't see why you should want to be seen with me." She nodded as she passed her father and Finnerty, and Dolan called out, "Moind ye don't be gone long now." Then, as the young man made no answer, she added, "However, there ain't much chance of her seeing us, is there?"

"Her!" repeated Baretta, "who do you mean by her?"

"What's the use of trying to deceive me, Frank? Do you suppose that I haven't got eyes?"

"If it gives you any satisfaction to make yourself and me uncomfortable, I dare say you have a right to do so. Only I don't think it's fair, considering all I'm doing for your sake."

The girl stopped and faced him. "For my sake!" she cried, with a laugh in which there was not much merriment.

"Do you think I stay on here for any other reason?"

"Well, then," she retorted, with another laugh, "you can go."

The ugly scowl came over Baretta's face. "Oh, if you want to get rid of me—"

"We're going out to Chestnut Hill, ain't we?" interrupted Maud, walking on.

"See here, Maud," continued Baretta, trying to speak more pleasantly, "it's foolish for us to quarrel. I don't know what extraordinary notion you've got in your head. If you mean that any of the people you like to call my swell friends will now come between us, that shows how little you know them—or me. I told you once I would stay in Arragon Street for your sake, and I will keep my word. Of course if you no longer care for me—"

"What do you want to say that for?" she burst out passionately. "Do you want to lower my pride—my self-respect? To be sure, I haven't got much. How could I have? No girl who thought anything of herself would tell a man that she—how much she cared for him." She paused a moment, and then went on: "Well, it's the truth—I ain't ashamed of it. *She* wouldn't say that."

The sincerity of this declaration—at once confused and explicit—touched him. "Maud, dear," he said, very gently, "you know I love you. And I wish you wouldn't talk as if there was any one else."

She regarded him a moment through eyes that glistened with unshed tears. "Oh, but there would be if things were different," she said. "I'm only a second best. Do you suppose I'm such a fool as not to know that?"

Baretta offered her his arm and drew her closer to him. They had now turned the corner from Madrid Street into Columbus Avenue. "I know what you mean, Maud, but you are wrong there. It is quite true that one or two people have been very kind to me. One of them is a—young lady, the daughter of Mr. Lawrence; you have heard me speak of him. And I—I admire her very much; you would, if you knew her. But—well, just you go to her and tell her I am in love with her and see what she would say. Why, if I should hint at such a thing her father would turn me out of the house. You see," he added, bitterly, "it's all very well to take up with common folks like us, but we mustn't make the mistake of forgetting our station."

"You are not common, Frank. Your father was a great man in his own country."

"Oh, well!" cried Baretta, irritably, for somehow her implicit belief in his pretensions annoyed him for the moment, although not sufficiently to lead him to tell her the truth; "that doesn't make any difference here. I'm an unknown adventurer—that's the way they look at me. They're only taking me up to amuse themselves. Yates says so."

"But you said they had a great interest—they were going to help you."

"I say that Yates thinks that—not that I do. But he has a reason."

"What reason?"

"How curious you are, Maud. He's jealous of me—he envies me my opportunities. Yates is a good enough sort of fellow, but he don't amount to much, and it annoys him to see me getting on."

"Well, he must be a mean thing, Frank!"

"Oh no—Yates isn't mean. I don't expect you can understand, exactly."

"There's so much I can't understand," said Maud, mournfully. "But I'll tell you what I wish."

"Well?" he said, encouragingly, seeing that she hesitated.

"I wish that you could get away from all these people—like—like us—and do something for yourself. You're too smart for them. You can find enough to do without going round with men like Ditton and Luck. That's why I think you ought to—to give me up."

This speech penetrated even Baretta's egotism, and touched him. "My dear Maud, I'll never give you up. I'll take you away with me."

"Oh, Frank!" she whispered, gratefully. Perhaps she had not been quite sincere in her offer of renunciation; at all events, his refusal to accept it flooded her heart with sudden rapture. "Oh, Frank!" she repeated, "no one will ever love you as I do."

After that neither said anything until they were in the car and on their way to Chestnut Hill. It was worth while, Baretta thought, to have heard Maud say she loved him, even although

there was another whom he could have loved more than he did her. But since Mildred had said farewell to him so coldly he had recognized fully the impossibility of his aspirations in that direction. He had found some consolation in projecting himself in imagination into the scene of his future achievements, which were to make him famous enough to aspire to anything. These, however, were as yet impalpable, and meanwhile he felt the need of feminine sympathy. Besides, he was so far bound to Maud that he would not throw her over, especially when there was the risk of getting no one else if he did. And he really was fond of her. Those occasional moments of estrangement between them on the whole increased this fondness. A man less impressionable than Baretta would have been moved by Maud's fervid devotion.

"You ought to live in a house like that," said Maud, presently, as the car whizzed along the broad boulevard. She pointed to a pretty villa, perched upon a bank above the road, and half-hidden in clambering vines.

"Oh, that! Why, it's Allen's house," said Baretta. "I was out there not long ago. It's closed now. I suppose he's gone away for the summer with the rest of them."

"Who is he?" asked Maud. "I don't think if I had a house like that I'd want to go away."

"Didn't you see how they were all boarded up back on Beacon Street? Oh yes, they go away to—to Beverly, and never think once of those that stay behind shut up in stifling tenements on a day like this!"

"Yes, it's hard that some people should have everything," said Maud. "But why should they think of the others?"

"Oh, well, you wait! When we have our rights, people won't live in Arragon Street while places like these are empty."

"But do you think that time will ever come, Frank? Because I don't."

"It's what I'm working for—it's what I'd give my life for!" said Baretta.

"Don't!" said Maud. A man on the seat in front had turned around, and she fancied that he had heard. "I want you to keep your life—for me," she murmured, nestling a little

closer to him. In Arragon Street they took manifestations of affection in public as a matter of course. Maud, to be sure, had never been a girl to allow indiscriminate familiarity. But Baretta stood in a different relation to her than the rest. She withdrew herself again, however, when she saw that he made no response, and that sudden chill of conviction that he did not really love her once more took possession of her heart.

"Do you see the man on the second seat in front?" asked Baretta, heeding neither movement. "That is Mr. Allen himself. I wonder we didn't see him get in."

"Oh, well!" said Maud, with an air of pique, "if you are more interested in him than in me, why didn't you go and talk to him!"

"Don't be foolish!" said the young man, impatiently. At this moment Mr. Allen turned partly in his seat and caught sight of him.

"Ah, I want to talk with you," he said, as he swung himself into the seat directly in front. Then he looked at Maud and lifted his hat. "I beg your pardon—I thought you were alone."

"This is Miss Dolan," said Baretta, looking confused, and mumbling the name in the hope that Mr. Allen would not get a very accurate idea of it. To be found with Miss Dolan was too hopelessly plebeian. Maud looked very pretty—she had on a simple white dress that she had washed and ironed herself only the day before, and a knot of dark-red ribbon at the throat and a band of the same about her waist. But any one could see that she was not a lady; this conviction made her companion feel quite miserable.

Maud blushed slightly under Mr. Allen's scrutiny and extended her hand. Baretta thought he detected an amused smile on Mr. Allen's face as he took it a moment, bowed, and then said, "I am very pleased to meet you, Miss—er—"

"Dolan," said Maud, with unmistakable clearness.

"Ah, Dolan. I am a dreadfully bad hand at catching names, don't you know," said Mr. Allen, pleasantly, while Baretta scowled and ground his teeth in helpless rage. "What a frightfully hot day it has been! I've had the house closed tight, but somehow the heat got in."

"We saw your house as we came by," said Maud, smiling, "and Frank—Mr. Baretta—said you must be gone away for the summer."

Baretta scowled again, more fiercely than before. But neither of them saw him. He was humiliated by that unconscious confession of familiarity on Maud's part in using his first name, and he was also annoyed to think—why, he could not exactly tell—that she should let Mr. Allen know they had been talking about him.

"Oh no—I don't sail until Saturday."

"You are going on a boat?" asked Maud, who seemed to have no feeling of shyness at all in the presence of this young man, who had such an agreeable voice and who addressed her with so much courteous deference.

"To the other side, you know," he said, smiling again. "I go every summer. I was sorry not to sail last month," he added, turning to catch Baretta's eye. "Mrs. Chilton went then, and I am very fond of Mrs. Chilton."

Maud thought that this was a queer way of speaking of a married lady; but she concluded that it must be one of those customs of society of which she knew nothing. "I guess I've heard of Mrs. Chilton," she said.

"Ah, yes! She has a great admiration for our friend. She expects him to do wonderful things with his lectures."

"He's awful smart!" assented Maud, with a laugh which betrayed an immense satisfaction in that fact.

"That's a compliment worth having. I sha'n't agree with you, though, because Baretta's vain enough already."

"I wish you wouldn't say such things." Baretta spoke calmly enough, although in truth he was anything but calm.

"Which of us is that meant for?" asked Mr. Allen. Then, with ready tact, he changed his tone. He felt that they might be getting upon dangerous ground. "Well, Mr. Baretta, I hope you'll get on with those lectures; I shall be quite anxious to hear them. By-the-way, have you begun your work for the *Mail* yet? It was that which I wanted to speak to you about."

"I sent Mr. Binney the first article yesterday."

"Well, you must make him let you sign it; I should make a point of that."

"So Mr. Yates said. Do you know him—Philip Yates?"

"Not very well. He's a good sort of fellow, though. By-the-way, he was once engaged to your friend Miss Lawrence. I dare say you knew that."

Baretta's heart throbbed with sudden emotion when Mr. Allen said this; but although this emotion was in some measure reflected in the dull red flush that overspread his face, he affected an air of calmness. "To Yates? I—oh yes, I may have heard something of the sort and forgotten it."

Maud, watching him, was not deceived by his tone. Oh, it was only too true, she told herself, that he was in love with this young lady, who would look down upon him—who would not admire him as she did. She felt angry with this unknown Miss Lawrence, forgetting that she wanted Baretta for herself, and had every reason to be grateful to one who did not want him.

"Miss Lawrence doesn't like me," Mr. Allen went on; "I remember telling you that at Mrs. Chilton's. But I am magnanimous enough to admire her very greatly. Are you going as far as the Reservoir? It's a pleasant night for a ride. One can keep cool in an open car if anywhere. I get off at the next street. Good-evening—good-evening, Miss Dolan." He lifted his hat to Maud and nodded cheerfully to Baretta as the car slackened speed, and then swung himself from the high step.

"Is he a great friend of yours?" asked Maud, looking after him as the car rolled on.

"No," answered Baretta, curtly.

"He was very nice, anyway. I don't think you acted very polite to him."

"As you and he did all the talking, I don't see how I could be."

"Why, Frank, you ain't mad with me because I spoke to him?"

"No, no; of course not." Baretta could not explain to Maud why he had been annoyed by the meeting, and he was anxious not to hurt her feelings by letting her see that he was annoyed at all. Having put Mildred Lawrence out of his mind altogether, as he thought, he was determined to make the best of his relations with this other girl—one, he thought bitterly, of

his own station in life. But still the wound was there, and it gave him moments of wellnigh unendurable pain. He was thinking now of what Mr. Allen had told him. So he had found out why Yates and Miss Lawrence were strangers! They had been lovers, and something had happened to part them. He made up his mind that he would find out what it had been. He did not dislike Yates; as Mr. Allen had said, he was a very good sort of fellow. But he was conscious of a curious feeling of exultation in the knowledge that he and Miss Lawrence had quarrelled, as well as of a wild hope that it would somehow be an advantage to himself. This was inconsistent in him after he had determined to marry Maud, but the operation of the human mind in such cases often is inconsistent.

"Miss Lawrence must be very pretty—you all seem to be gone on her."

Maud's remark awoke him from his reflections. It also irritated him.

"Oh, don't let us be everlastingly talking about her," he said. "She's nothing to you—or to me."

"Well, I'm sure! You said she was kind to you."

"See here, Maud! I won't let any of them patronize me. The time has gone by for that. I've got a start and I'm able to make my own way. And Yates, confound him! and all the rest of them, needn't put on any more airs!"

The car had stopped at the entrance to the Reservoir. "It won't go back for ten minutes," said Baretta, as he helped the girl alight. "Come, let us walk for a little."

"Oh, Frank!" cried Maud to him piteously, as they went along the white road under the trees, where already the summer evening, fresh and sweet out here far from the hot pavements, was turning to dusk, "is it really me you care for?"

She put out her hand, and he took it in his. "Really," he said; and perhaps for the moment he believed it. At all events, he drew her farther into the shadow, and bent down and kissed her. As their lips met she gave a passionate shudder, and threw her arms about his neck. "It would kill me to lose you now!" she said. And when he looked in her eyes again he saw that they were full of tears.

CHAPTER XI

PLAYING WITH FIRE

MAUD was very quiet all the way home. Perhaps she regretted that impulsive confession. She was very much in love with Baretta and very proud of him; but she could not help feeling that the heroines of whom she liked to read would not have done anything so undignified. To be sure, they were ladies of rank, who inspired undying devotion in handsome captains or wealthy earls, and it was comparatively easy for them to accept homage passively. The audacious ones, those who sprang at men and kissed them, always came to some bad end. Usually it was death by drowning, or something of that sort, and then those who had despised them, or who had believed evil of them, went away and never smiled again. Maud did not think that anything which could happen to her would afflict Baretta so deeply as that. She knew, as she said, that she was only second best. But she worshipped him so that even with this much she was content. By-and-by he might see that she deserved the first place. It was the truth, she felt sure, that no one would ever love him as much as she did.

A man who could inspire an affection like this, even in a poor and half-educated girl like Maud Dolan, might well have regarded the trust imposed upon him as something sacred. It is doubtful, however, if Baretta had any such feeling. He was touched by the evidence of her passionate love, of course, and perhaps for the moment it kindled in him an answering flame. But he had bound himself to her with misgivings, and these were more potent than any charm which her fresh young beauty might exercise over him. He had not meant to bind himself at

all. But when he had promised not to go away from Arragon Street he had taken a step from the consequences of which he could not escape. After that it was so easy to fall into the position of a lover, especially when there was a man like Dolan to reckon with. His daily association with her of itself meant that there must be something definite between them. There had been times, indeed, when it seemed as if Maud herself were determined to break off their relations altogether. He remembered how, for several days after his promise to her to stay, she had resolutely avoided him, and had almost refused to speak to him. And there had been occasions since when he had felt that she would not care whether he stayed or went. Now, however, the bond was inevitable. Well, what better could he ask, knowing as he did the utter hopelessness of that wild dream of his? Maud might be queer, and she certainly was not a lady; but she was a good girl and fond of him. Why should a man ask more? He looked at her as she sat beside him, and thought with satisfaction how pretty she was. Of course she could never appeal to the intellectual part of his nature. But the warm, rich colouring of her cheek, her glistening dark eyes, the gracious fulness of her figure, the strong feminine magnetism of her presence, filled him with a certain sensuous delight which it was worth while to experience.

"Maud," he said, after a time, "I am worried about that strike."

The girl had been dreaming of vague impossibilities in which he was always the central object, and she gave a little shiver of impatience at being thus suddenly recalled to the solid ground of fact. "Oh, bother the strike!" she said. "What harm can it do us?"

"A good deal, I should say, if your father is out of work for weeks and weeks, and spends his time in the saloons."

"Why do you want to remind me of the disagreeable things?" she asked, petulantly. "All the happiness I have is in thinking that you are going to take me away from them."

"That is all very fine," said Baretta, irritably, "but I can't take you away to-morrow, and meanwhile—"

"Oh, don't let us think of meanwhiles! Let us have to-night

all to ourselves. I want you to just feel that you are mine, and that no one can come between us, and that all the past is a horrid nightmare."

To this Baretta made no reply. It struck him that she was very selfish, and he wondered once more if marrying her would drag him down to her level, and thwart all his great plans for humanity. Why had Mildred Lawrence said good-bye to him so coldly? It was that which had led him to renounce all his hopes, and to try to satisfy himself with Maud. He felt as if he had suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of fate. And when they were in Arragon Street once more, back in the heat and the foul odours, it seemed as if soul as well as body were stifling in a miasmatic atmosphere. He stopped at the door—the children had gone to bed and the step was deserted—and looked vaguely down the narrow thoroughfare with an unutterable longing for some way of escape.

"Ain't you coming in, Frank?" asked Maud. "Oh, well, don't think I care whether you do or not," she added, as he hesitated.

"I thought it might be cooler here," he said, controlling his inclination to speak sharply. "Of course I'm coming in." In the darkness of the entry he put his arm about her waist and drew her closer to him.

"Don't!" she cried, trying to repulse him.

"But Maud, dear!" He lifted her face with gentle force to his.

"Are you sure you love me, Frank?" she asked.

"Sure!" He kissed her again and again, trying to convince himself, perhaps, as well as her of his sincerity. "Don't go upstairs yet, Maud. Sit here a while with me."

She could not resist this entreaty: whatever her doubts might be she loved him too entirely to deny him anything. And when, sitting by his side on the stairs, her head sank upon his shoulder and he bent over and kissed her again, she was conscious of a delicious feeling of peace and security. Nothing could distress her more, now that he was wholly hers. But she would make him go away from Arragon Street as soon as they were married. She wanted to have that dark chapter in her life closed at once and forever.

The problem of existence for Baretta, however, could not be settled so easily as that. He recurred to the subject of the strike when he saw her the next morning, and said that he was going to see if the dispute between masters and men could not be settled. He would talk to them at the club that night about it. A fellow like Luck had no right to throw a lot of working-men out of employment to gratify his own spite.

"I wish, Frank, you'd let them all alone," interrupted Mand at this point. "They ain't none of them good enough for you."

"Abandon my work! What then would I do?"

"Something that would bring you in more money. I'm sure your newspaper editor you told me about would give you something to do."

"I think I am the best judge of my own affairs," retorted Baretta. Then, as he was going out, he came back to kiss her good-bye. "Don't think I'm cross," he added. "But you must try to sympathize with me in this great scheme of mine. It means something more than mere bread and butter."

He went to see Ditton that afternoon, and tried to argue him into his way of thinking. "We want to get rid of that man Luck, Mr. Ditton," he said. "I feel positive about that."

"Well, Baretta," said Ditton, "I can't help thinking that you feel positive about a good many things."

"I suppose you mean that for a gibe at me," cried the young man.

"I mean it for a friendly hint, and I hope you won't take it amiss. After all, Baretta, I have lived longer in the world than you have, and perhaps I have some right to advise you, aside from any question of personal interest."

"Do you consider me ungrateful to you for all your kindness? Is that what you would say?"

Ditton took a few turns up and down the stuffy little room before he replied. The Socialist preacher had no fixed habitation. When he had money enough he would hire a lodging at some fourth-rate hotel like this—a not over-tidy house in Beach Street, of which the chief business was liquor selling. The lodgers were seldom reputable, and almost never clean. But Ditton often found himself without a penny in his pockets, and

on such occasions, unless he happened to think of some friend near by, he would pass the day on a bench on the Common and the night in the streets. Most of the policemen knew him, and helped him out by allowing him to slumber undisturbed beneath some convenient shelter. Several times Baretta had come across him in this homeless state and had taken him along to Arragon Street.

"You are trying to be unreasonable," said Ditton at last. "No—hold on a minute; let me have my say out and then I will listen to you. You will make a great mistake if you get into a quarrel with Luck. It will be a bad thing for you personally, and it will be a bad thing for us. Mind you, I share something of your prejudice against the man. I think he is for Luck first and the working-man second. But then you have got to take men as you find them. Unselfishness is a fine quality, but it's one in which most of us are deficient. As for this strike, I don't care whether it's for Luck's own advantage or not. The point is whether it's for our advantage—for the benefit of the struggling masses whose battle we've undertaken to fight. You and I certainly don't care a rap for the bloody capitalists who own the works. They have got rich out of the sweat of other men's brows, and for them to cut down wages is infamous—simply infamous. Luck is helping the men to make a stand for their rights, and why should we—why should you—turn against him?"

"Because, as I told you the other day, I don't think the men will get their rights in the end, and because every useless demonstration weakens instead of strengthens the cause."

"You can't weaken the cause by showing these legalized robbers that you have a little courage," cried Ditton.

"Ah, if you call it courage!" said Baretta. "For my part, I can't see that doubling up your fists does any good unless you are going to knock the man down."

"I see very well, Baretta, that you want to draw out—that you are getting tired of the work."

"Look here, Mr. Ditton!" cried the young man, hotly. "You've told me that before, and I don't intend to stand it—not from you nor from anybody. I'm willing to give my life for the

cause—if only I can feel that it's not thrown away. All I say is, don't strike the blow until you can make it a heavy one."

"And meanwhile, I suppose, you will try to convert your swells."

"Well, is there any harm in getting all the help you can? If I can find people to listen to me I'm ready to talk to them, whether they live in Beacon Street or at the North End."

"Help from some quarters is a hinderance, Baretta. But I see that you're bound to have your own way. Don't hurry," he added, as Baretta took up his hat. "Are you coming to the meeting to-night?"

"Yes—I shall be there."

"Well, for Heaven's sake keep your mouth shut and don't raise a row."

"Oh yes!" cried Baretta, turning in the doorway. "You're bound to down me, too; I might have expected it! But you can't do it!" he continued, with angry vehemence. "No one can do it! I shall be there, and I shall have my say!" Then he went, banging the door behind him.

The room was crowded when Baretta entered it that evening, and the conversation at the small tables had already become very noisy. Most of the men, being now out of work, were spending more than the usual amount of money for drink. Ditton was speaking, his strident voice rising high above the rest, and compelling now and then a lull in the individual discussions going on around him.

"I want you to listen to this," he shouted, waving a newspaper. "It's an item of a few lines in this evening's *Trumpet*."

"Damn the *Trumpet*!" came from the murky atmosphere.

"I accept the amendment. It's bought and paid for by the bloody thieves who have bound you all hand and foot. But I want to read you a few lines from it just the same." He pounded the table vigorously. "I wish you'd all listen to this," he said.

The room was intensely close—it was so crowded, and the atmosphere was vitiated by the smoke of bad tobacco, the fumes of whiskey, and the foul breath from a hundred throats—and Ditton mopped his face with his handkerchief as he stood there

waiting for them to be silent. "I'm not going to talk to you long," he said, at last. "The time for talking has gone by; it's time to act. This is what I want to read you from the *Trumpet*," he cried, waving the paper. "It's the story of a suicide—of a man who jumped off a Sound steamer the other night. 'Oh, that's a common thing,' I hear you saying; 'why does he want us to hear about that?' Yes, curse 'em, it's a common thing! Perhaps it's what some of us may do if we can't get justice from the blood-hounds who are tracking us down."

Here shouts and oaths interrupted the speaker, and he was forced to pound upon the table again before he could go on.

"This man, my friends, left a letter behind him. It was addressed to his sister—the only near relative he had in the world. Now just keep quiet a minute and I'll read you the letter. The *Trumpet* has printed it—the editor didn't see it in time to cut it out. Hear what poor Thomas Morgan wrote to his sister. 'When this reaches you'—I'm reading exactly what's printed in the *Trumpet*—'I shall have done with life. Extreme poverty has driven me to this desperate step. I could not earn anything, and I did not wish the labouring man to pay taxes to support me.'"

"That's where he was right!" cried some one in the crowd.

"Hold on, my friends!" continued Ditton. "Here's a few lines marked 'Later.' No doubt they were written just before the ag-onized and desperate man threw himself overboard. 'I am now hungry,' Morgan wrote, 'but I shall get over that before mid-night. When I throw myself off the boat that will finish the job.' Yes," said Ditton, "that finished the job. So Thomas Morgan settled the problem. So he died, while thousands around him were revelling in luxury."

"Damn 'em!" came from the murky depths of the room.

"Yes, damn 'em! damn 'em!" repeated Ditton, with sudden fury. He threw the paper aside with an angry gesture and leaped upon the table, gesticulating wildly. "There are thousands of men in this country who kill themselves every year because they are poor. Right at the doors of the fine houses on Beacon Street—where men sit drinking their wine and women blaze in diamonds—they kill themselves, and still the

laughter goes on. Water, rope, or bullets do it, and they make their appeal from a pitiless world to God. God?—is there a God, I wonder, to permit such things? I used to believe in Him once, but I didn't know then one-half the sorrow and sin and shame there is in the world. Curse the rich men who make such things possible! Curse the system that is crushing us all down to a hopeless bitter life that is worse than death! Curse—”

Here Ditton's voice was overwhelmed in the torrent of inarticulate execrations which rose from the crowd. Some of the men had perhaps taken too much whiskey to know exactly what they were saying; but it was obvious that some one was to blame for their poverty, and for the fact that most of them were now out of work.

Baretta looked on at all this with something like a pitying smile. Yes, it was all true, what Ditton had said. In a regenerated society no man would be richer than another, and the industrial conditions which economists defended with their feeble prate about supply and demand would no longer exist. But somehow or other he was no longer in sympathy with these wild denunciations; he was not in the cursing mood. And this was not, he told himself, because he was growing lukewarm towards the cause, as Ditton had hinted; there was no one there who could be willing to make greater sacrifices than he. Nevertheless he saw the supreme folly of simply crying out “Curse them!” That could not advance the cause a bit. Curses were not tangible things. Ditton was a good deal of a fool, after all. He ought to know that this strike would be futile. With a fellow like Luck concerned in it, what could you expect? He now caught a glimpse of Luck, standing near Ditton and listening with a certain look of triumph on his red, brutal face to these whirling words. And presently he saw Ditton step down and Luck take his place. At this a sort of blind rage came over him. Why should that fellow have everything his own way? He pressed forward through the crowd until he stood close by the table. Then he raised his voice high above the din and shouted, “Don't listen to that man until you have heard me!”

CHAPTER XII

AN EXPLOSION

THIS sudden appeal was followed almost instantly by a dead silence. Men in the act of drinking set their glasses down untasted, and others removed their pipes from their mouths in their eagerness to discover what was up. All had that instinctive consciousness of what they called a "row," which led them to yield everything for the moment to curiosity. And perhaps something in Baretta's appearance a little awed as well as startled them. He had sprung into a chair, and although Luck still stood upon the table, he seemed somehow to tower above him. His face was white with passion, and his black eyes blazed with excitement; nor had that habitual scowl ever been more intense, more livid. He raised his fist and shook it at Luck. "You haven't any right to speak to decent men, you scoundrel!" he cried.

"Scoundrel!" sputtered Luck, his face redder than ever, cowering a little, as if he had received a blow.

But Baretta's words had broken the spell of silence, and now voices were heard in all directions, many of them in angry protest. "Give every man a chance," was the burden of several. "No, no—we won't have no fighting here!" "Sit down, Baretta!" "Sit down, ye young fool!" These were the cries that came from the crowd.

"I want you to listen to me—just give me a chance to prove my words!" cried Baretta.

Here Ditton interfered. "Luck has the floor," he said. Then, turning to Baretta, "When he's done, you can talk all you want to," he added, roughly.

The listeners stamped and shouted approval, and some of them were so delighted that they had their glasses filled once more. They didn't mind a row as a rule, even if it were a rather violent one. But just now they were inclined to object, because they suspected that the end of it would be their ejection from the place; and they were immensely comfortable over their pipes and beer, and listening to the story of their thralldom.

As it turned out, however, Luck had very little to say that was to the point. Perhaps Baretta's onslaught had disconcerted him. Baretta was now sullenly standing a little back from the table, leaning against the wall with folded arms. His face was still distorted by the workings of passion, and he shot glances of angry disdain both at Luck and at Ditton from under his heavy eyebrows. He was already beginning to regret that sudden outburst. It was all true; Luck was a scoundrel—that he knew very well. But proof is often difficult where accusation is easy. He felt that it was at once too soon and too late to argue that the strike was a piece of folly. They might believe him after they had been out of work for several weeks, or they might have done so before their decision had been taken. Now things must run their course, and he had only thrown himself into the breach to be battered down by the force of circumstances. He could denounce Luck, of course; indeed, that was what he must do. He could tell this excited half-drunken crowd that the man was simply playing upon their necessities for his own advantage—that it was because they paid their assessments into the Union that he and his kind were able to find the occupation of stirring up trouble between employers and employed sufficiently remunerative. But this, after all, was a reflection upon themselves as well as upon Luck. The working-man is seldom logical, but he might be trusted to make such an obvious deduction. Oh no; he would get no thanks for trying to enlighten them; he would not even have the satisfaction of triumphing over a man whom he hated. He was very sure of this as he stood there glowering upon them all. Nevertheless, he would go through with it; he would say his say when the opportunity came. He knew now that he could expect no aid from Ditton, who had taken Luck's side rather than his. Ditton

was jealous of him—meanly and contemptibly jealous. Had he not all along been trying to keep him down? Baretta told himself that he was not such a fool as not to recognize the meaning of it. The friendship of people who would not have noticed Ditton at all had aroused this jealousy. Ditton had tried to keep him away from them by professing to believe that he was a traitor to the cause—he who had turned his back on all the allurements of society, and had gone to live in Arragon Street. At other times Baretta had felt that Mrs. Chilton and the rest looked down upon him, and had been as furiously angry with them as he now was with his present associates; but it was quite as easy to persuade himself that he was mistaken as to believe that he was right. He was fully conscious, at any rate, of his own mental superiority to either set, and confident of his ultimate success in showing it. A man like him was bound to make his way in spite of all.

Luck was maundering on about the rights of the labouring man, and the way in which these rights were disregarded by the capitalist. “You have as good a claim to your labour,” he was saying, “as your employers have to their mills and factories. When they make money you are entitled to your share of it. They have no more right to reduce your wages than you have to reduce their dividends. Ain’t you making them rich by the sweat of your brow? What would their property be worth to them if it wasn’t for you? Suppose every working-man in this city should quit to-morrow, where would your capital be then? It’s what you fellows have got to do yet, if you want to teach the rich that the poor have rights they are bound to respect. Why should they spend in a day what you earn in a year? Answer me that!”

The agitator went on in this strain for some time, being frequently interrupted by the applause of his hearers, who perhaps did not follow his arguments very closely, but who recognized the fact that he was giving it to the other side. As to the particular strike in hand he had little to say beyond advising the men “to stick it out,” and assuring them that the company would “weaken” first. “They’re making a great bluff,” said Luck, “but we’ve got the upperhand of them just the same.

Our pickets say there hain't been a scab shown up at the works to-day. Some of you men are working still at other shops, but every one of you would throw up his job to-morrow to help us out, wouldn't you?"

Several voices cried, "Yes, yes!" loudly, in response to this appeal. Nevertheless, there was some shaking of heads over this hint of a "sympathetic" strike. "A man who's got a job likes to keep it if he can," growled one.

"That's just the way some damn fools talk!" cried Luck, replying to this unwelcome suggestion. "Your job looks big to you, no doubt, but if you could get not only your rights, but those of thousands of other honest working-men, by throwing it up, would you hesitate long? I hope there ain't many men in this room who would."

"Chuck out the traitors!" The man who tendered this advice rose unsteadily from one of the tables at the back of the room, swinging a beer mug in his right hand. "Chuck 'em out, I say!"

At these words a malignant smile came over Luck's face. "If you're looking for traitors," he shouted, his voice rising high above the din which the suggestion had aroused, "why don't you begin with him?" And he pointed to Baretta, who was still surveying the scene with folded arms.

Instantly a profound silence fell upon the crowd. It was like the hush that precedes the storm. At first it seemed as if no one quite realized the full meaning of the words. Then Baretta, white to the very lips, sprang forward.

"I demand a hearing!" he cried, in high-pitched staccato tones.

The spell was broken. The reply was a dull roar from the crowd—a confusion of angry voices uttering muttered threats and execrations. But the young man faced his enemies without flinching, and something like admiration for his courageous attitude kept them from advancing upon him.

"Come, now, no nonsense—no fighting here!" Ditton had hitherto been watching the proceedings in silence, but he now stepped forward with the authoritative air which he was accustomed to use in dealing with his followers. "You've no business to say a thing like that," he went on, addressing Luck.

"What I say I can back up," retorted Luck, sullenly. As he spoke he stepped down from the table. "If Baretta ain't a traitor, let him prove it, that's all."

"Traitor!" cried Baretta. "It's you that's a damned scoundrel—deny it if you can!"

"Look here!" interrupted Ditton again. His rugged countenance was stern and set, and his eyes flashed as he spoke. "We've had enough of this calling names. If you have any charges to bring against Luck, young man, or any answer to make to his, now is your chance."

"Young man!" It seemed to Baretta as if Ditton had purposely tried to insult him by calling him that; and for a moment wrath choked his further utterance. Nothing was more obvious than the fact that his former friend and counsellor was taking sides against him. Because he would no longer submit unquestioningly to his authority, Ditton was determined to crush him. But he would show them all that he was superior to their petty malice. "Yes, I suppose I am a young man," he said, trying to regain his self-control, "but you've been mighty glad to have my help all the same. And I think I've done more for every man in this room than that fellow, who gets his living out of the wages of honest workmen. I don't drink champagne every day and drive about in carriages."

"You're a dirty liar!" interjected Luck, promptly.

"Well, you'll have hard work to prove me one. Listen to me!" he cried, as the ominous murmur of anger arose once more from the crowd, most of whom had risen from the tables and were pressing nearer to the speaker. "I want you to have your rights as much as any man here. I'd go out and blow up the works and shoot the manager if it would do you any good. I'm in favour of strikes or of anything that will get the workman his rights. Don't make any mistake about that. But I say that a man who goes about as he does, just stirring up trouble, and ordering you to quit whenever he takes the notion, and getting two men's wages and his expenses every day from the Union—"

"Hear him! He's down on the Union—he wants you to work with a lot of damned scabs." Luck drew his sleeve across his forehead to wipe away the perspiration, which had gathered upon

it in beady drops. "Why don't you wipe up the floor with his bloody carcass?"

"Stop!" Ditton's rough voice again subdued the rising din of rage. "Violence is no argument. You'd better keep quiet, Luck, and for the rest of you, if it comes to that, I'm going to see that Baretta has fair play."

"We're tired of his lip!" cried some one in the crowd.

"You won't have much more of it, then," retorted Baretta, "if you fellows mean to let a low-down scoundrel—yes, a scoundrel—lead you about by the nose, and live in luxury off your earnings, while you starve. No, I'm not saying a word against the Union. Where would you be without it? The only way you can bring the capitalist to terms is to combine among yourselves—do you think I don't know that? But do you call this combining to any purpose? What good can a few hundred of you do by stopping work? I know you've not been treated right, and I hope you'll get higher wages before you go back. I tell you, though, you can't do anything by a strike here and a strike there. What you must do is to make a combination so strong that nothing can resist you—not even the whole power of the United States. Then you'll get somewhere and do something."

"And might I ask," inquired Ditton, "how you propose to form such a combination?"

"Oh, my plans are not all developed yet, Mr. Ditton. I'll leave that to your superior genius. All I have to say is this—that if every workman in the country, from Boston to New Orleans and New York to San Francisco, should become members of a single organization, no man living would dare to stand up against them. Their moral force would be irresistible, because it would be backed by physical force. The tools of Wall Street would know then that our threats meant something. And if they didn't—well, powder is cheap, and that sort of argument would be very effective."

"Damn all this fine talk!" broke out Luck, impatiently. "Are you a traitor or ain't you? That's what we want to know."

"You're right, Luck—that's what we want to know." And the crowd pressed a little nearer to Baretta. He had never been especially popular with them; they disliked what they called his

haughty way. Perhaps Dolan had stimulated this dislike. Baretta saw him now, standing in the very fore-front of his hostile audience. Furthermore, he felt that the decision would go against him. The explanation which he had given of his attitude seemed very lucid to himself, but it had evidently been rather confusing to the rest. He had never had the gift of striking the popular note. Indeed, in this Socialist propaganda he had almost invariably left the public speaking to Ditton, his own field being the individual argument. Perhaps his lack of authority over these uneducated men was due to his hardly disguised contempt for them. Ditton often spoke to them roughly, but still it was with a fraternal feeling which they were quick to appreciate.

"Isn't my word as good as his?" demanded Baretta, in answer to this accusation of bad faith. "What do you mean by being a traitor, anyway? Who have I betrayed? Haven't I given my life to working for you? For one thing, I don't get any four dollars a day and expenses. Perhaps you think because I've got a few friends among the rich that I'm going back on you. Well, I'm not—all that I want to do is to make them your friends, too. We don't any of us care about fighting people who are willing to come to our terms." Baretta paused a moment to note the effect of his words. Perhaps he imagined that he was really moving his hearers a little—that he was bringing them about to his way of thinking. But he was soon undeceived upon this point. Luck had been working his way into the midst of the crowd during the last few minutes, and now he raised his voice again—this time to some purpose.

"We've had about enough gab, boys," he cried. "Down with him!"

With a roar of passionate animosity far more terrible than the first outburst had been, the furious mob surged forward. Baretta fell back trembling before the onset. He was no coward, but the impulse of flight was a natural one under such circumstances. But when he saw how completely hemmed in he was he turned and faced his antagonists boldly. They might kill him, but he would sell his life dear. A sudden paroxysm of wrath swept over him, and one or two of the leaders actually

fell back a step or two when they looked into his livid face and flashing eyes.

"Down with the dirty villain!" howled Dolan, noting their hesitation. "Hit him on the head—look out for his dom knife!"

But here this one man against many had the aid of an unexpected ally. Ditton had been disposed to take Luck's part rather than Baretta's in the preceding dispute, and perhaps he, too, believed that Baretta was playing his associates false; it will be remembered that he had hinted as much on a previous occasion. But that question was of little account when a possible murder was the issue. No one there might have any intention of killing the young man, but in a crowd like that, angry and revengeful, who could tell what would happen? So Ditton sprang to Baretta's side.

"Back, back!" he cried. "Leave him alone!"

"Down with him—jump on the dom cuss!" It was Dolan who had taken Luck's place as ringleader, and it was obvious that he intended to do all the mischief he could. Besides, the pressure from behind was now so great that those in front were forced forward. Baretta braced himself for the inevitable onset, keeping his eyes on Dolan. He had grasped the back of a chair as if for support. Now suddenly he raised it aloft and brought it down with all the force he could command upon Dolan's head. The man fell heavily to the floor with a loud groan.

"What the devil did you do that for?" whispered Ditton in his ear. "Now's your chance—run! run!"

"I'll not run—I'll stay if they kill me!" shouted Baretta. His action in felling Dolan seemed to have increased rather than diminished his fury; when a man has once lost control of himself in that way a blind physical courage is instinctive. It was quite true that he had a chance to escape. The way to the door was clear, the crowd being for the moment apparently dazed by the suddenness of the attack on its leader. But it was only a chance, and it was gone almost immediately. Two men stopped to drag Dolan out of the way. Two more made a dash at Baretta. It was out of the question that he should hold his own against them. He was slightly built, and not in the least mus-

cular, and although he struck out savagely, he was no formidable opponent. In a minute he was down, pinioned on each side, in spite of his struggles.

"Kick him!" "Knock the guts out of him!" "Smash his bloody head!" These were the directions which came from the excited men. Ditton was trying to push them back by main force. He gesticulated and argued, and even threatened. But they were in an ugly temper by this time, and the yells of Luck and one or two others for revenge upon "the dirty scab"—Baretta being characterized in this phrase because of the odium it conveyed rather than because of any fitness in it under the present circumstances—were sufficient to counterbalance even Ditton's authority.

"Try that agin—will ye?" cried one of those who were holding down the prostrate and panting young man. "Take that!" He hit him a savage blow in the face, drawing blood.

"Take that—and that!" Another of the crowd was kicking him furiously, and when Ditton sprang forward to drag the assailant away, he himself was seized from behind and firmly held. "Let the fellow go—there'll be murder if you don't look out!" cried Ditton, struggling to free himself. "Let me alone—how dare you hold me?"

But what Ditton could not do was done by a waiter, who, attracted by the tumult, rushed in at this juncture. "The cops!" he shouted.

Perhaps even then the exasperated men might not have paid much attention except that the gas was suddenly shut off, which led every one to stop crowding forward to the corner where Baretta lay, and to ask his neighbour what was up. The answer to this question was given in the voice of the proprietor of the place, who came in from the public bar adjoining.

"Youse fellers had better git," he said, calmly, but with an air of determination from which no one ventured to appeal. "An' if youse can't behave yersel's better'n this, youse can go somers else nex' time. See?"

"It's all right, Tim," said some one. "The young feller ain't hurt much."

“ Well, youse all pay up and git out. See?” He turned at the door into the bar to add: “ Ther’ ain’t no cop, but there’ll be a dozen on ’em damn quick if youse ain’t lively. Turn on the lights agin, Max.”

CHAPTER XIII

BARETTA LEAVES ARRAGON STREET

BARETTA opened his eyes to find himself lying on a lounge in an unfamiliar room, small and dimly lit. At first he thought that he was alone, but when he looked up a second time he saw Ditton bending over him. At the same moment he became conscious of a queer pain in his temples, and putting up his hand found that his head was bandaged.

"Sh, sh!" commanded Ditton. "Keep as quiet as you can. I'll get a carriage to take you home when you feel strong enough."

"What's the matter? What have I been doing?" murmured Baretta. He had an indistinct notion that he had been addressing a great crowd of men, and that suddenly they had all rushed at him, knocking him down and trampling on him. But he could not imagine what it meant or how it had happened.

"If you hadn't knocked Dolan down you could have got away all right. It was that which made them so mad."

"Oh—it was Dolan, was it?" A dim recollection of the scene was beginning to drift back into Baretta's mind. "Maud's father—poor Maud!" he muttered, indistinctly.

"What's that you say?" asked Ditton. He applied some more cold water to the young man's forehead with a sponge and patted the bandage gently. "Does it pain you much now?"

"Well, there's a good deal of thumping and throbbing going on. Who the deuce hit me such a blow as that?"

"Ah, you don't remember?"

"I'm beginning to," said Baretta, after a moment of silence. "It's all that damned Luck!"

"Well, if you care for my opinion, I must say that you brought it on yourself. What did you mean by calling him a scoundrel? I think you must have been beside yourself with rage."

"I only told the truth; you'll find it out yourself some day."

To this prediction Ditton made no reply. He stood surveying the young man for some time with a puzzled expression. "I wish I knew what to make of you," he said at last.

"Of me?"

"You can't come to our meetings again; of course you realize that."

"Well, who wants to come?"

"Ah, I'm afraid Luck was right." Ditton shook his head rather sorrowfully. Then, as Baretta said nothing in reply, he added, "You just stay there till I come back. I'm going to get a carriage—you never can walk home in the world."

Was he, then, very much hurt? Baretta asked himself after Ditton had gone. That pain in his temples was the worst, but when he tried to move he found that one shoulder was stiff and aching, and that his legs were sore with bruises. His notion that he had been knocked down and trampled upon was obviously not an imaginary one. How had it happened? He remembered now that he had rushed forward to denounce Luck, and that Ditton had refused to allow him a hearing. Perhaps his wrath was hotter against Ditton than against Luck just at present. The talk about treachery came back to him, and he felt that it was his old master who had been the traitor. Nothing but jealousy could have prevented him from taking the part of so faithful a disciple. Of course that mob of ignorant fools had taken their cue from their real leader, not from Luck. Baretta was not in the least grateful to Ditton for his efforts to prevent the scrimmage that had taken place. If they had been sincere they would have been more successful. He began to recall now with more distinctness the events which had preceded his fainting away under the cruel kicks and cuffs of his assailants. No doubt they would have killed him if they had not been interrupted. He could see once more the evil glance in Dolan's eyes. Dolan!—he had fallen with a groan. Was he dead, and was he himself a murderer? "Maud's father—poor Maud!" he murmured once

more. What awful shadow had come between them now? Poor Maud, indeed; he knew too well what a burden of suffering this would throw upon her. Poor Maud! who had loved him so passionately! He groaned aloud. This agony of the mind was worse than bodily pain.

"The carriage is here," said Ditton, returning presently. "We can take you through the side door. There is no one in the back room now. Wait a minute—you can't walk; we must carry you out."

"Where will you carry me? To jail?"

"What nonsense are you talking now. You want to get home and have a doctor look at that cut. By-the-way, have you any money?" asked Ditton, running his hands into his pockets. "I haven't but fifty cents."

"Well, why don't you tell me the truth?" demanded Baretta, impatiently. "Is—is he dead?"

"Is who dead?"

"Why, I thought I might have killed him—wasn't it Dolan that I struck?"

"I guess Dolan's got a sore head, but it ain't half as bad as yours. Where do you carry your money? In this pocket? Let me see how much you've got." Ditton fumbled about and finally drew out a roll of bills. "You're better fixed than I am," he said, rather bitterly, beginning to count it. "Twenty dollars! Well, you *are* one of the capitalists."

"I was paid that this morning for my two articles in the *Mail*. You needn't jeer at me—there wouldn't have been much of it left by to-morrow. But I suppose you won't take anything from me now."

"You'll want it all before you get through. Well, I suppose you can pay the hackman half a dollar for taking you to Aragon Street. I'll pay for myself."

"No, you won't, Mr. Ditton. You needn't go at all if you don't like."

"You acted like a fool, Baretta, but I ain't the kind of a man to go back on you when you're in trouble." He went to the door leading to the bar, and called to some one on the

other side. "Come in and lend a hand, can't you? He'll have to be carried out."

"But, see here, Ditton—I can never go back to Arragon Street."

"Nonsense! Where else can you go?"

"Anywhere but there. Get me a room somewhere."

"Are you afraid of Dolan?"

"I'm not afraid of anybody. But I'll never enter his house again."

"Oh, well, I don't know as I blame you. You take him on that side, Max, and I'll take him on this." As the two men lifted him a cry of pain escaped Baretta's lips. "Are you as badly hurt as all that?" asked Ditton, anxiously.

"I can stand it—I can stand anything," groaned Baretta, with set teeth.

But he was very pale and faint as he leaned back in the carriage, and at every jolt over the rough pavements he drew in his breath sharply. "Where are we going?" he asked, after a few minutes.

"To my room—it's near at hand," replied Ditton.

"Oh, but I mustn't give you that trouble. Send me somewhere else."

"Don't be foolish, Baretta. I've told you I ain't the sort of man to go back on a friend when he's in trouble."

"I didn't suppose you considered me a friend. You seemed willing enough to back up Luck."

"See here, you're too badly hurt to quarrel any more with me or anybody else. You just keep quiet—that's my advice."

And, indeed, when Baretta had been undressed and put to bed it was advice which he was very glad to follow. The doctor came presently and dressed the wound in his forehead, and wrote a prescription for some liniment to bathe the bruises, expressing the opinion that the patient would be about again in a few days, but that the blow on the head had come literally within an inch of killing him. He furthermore advised the young man to keep out of bar-room fights in the future—a caution which was hardly necessary in this case, and which rather ir-

ritated the recipient of it, who nevertheless did not try to clear his reputation by explaining.

Poor Maud! It was of her whom Baretta was thinking most when he was left alone in the darkness and the silence. Ditton had gone to Arragon Street to get some things of his which he needed, and, of course, he would tell them there exactly what had happened. Besides, Dolan must have been taken home by this time. The young man felt that his late landlord's story would not be favourable to him; but he knew pretty well how Maud would feel about it, and whose side she would take. To do him justice he was unselfishly anxious—at least, for the moment—in her behalf. The fervour of her love for him and the sincerity of her belief in him had touched him greatly; sometimes they had almost consoled him for the sting of his defeated aspirations elsewhere. Maud, at any rate, would be sorry for him, lying on his couch of pain—the poetical phrase struck him as happily descriptive—and would even shed tears for his sake. Well, of course, Miss Lawrence would pity him too, if she knew; she was always kind; but he could not discover, even in imagination, any tears in her eyes. No doubt she would grieve far more if anything happened to her dog, a wretched, snarling, apoplectic pug; he wondered what people could see to like in dogs. Would she, indeed, ever know? “A bar-room fight”—those were the words the doctor had used; that was the way the occurrence would get into those confounded newspapers. He would have liked to pose in her eyes as a wounded hero; perhaps in that case she might be a little proud of him; she would remember that Yates had never been a hero at all. But a bar-room fight! Baretta shed a few hot tears of self-pity and turned his face to the wall.

He must have fallen asleep, for the room was darker and stiller than ever when he opened his eyes again. How his head ached—how his temples were throbbing! Did Ditton mean to leave him all alone all night? Could he not have gone to Arragon Street and got back in all these hours? Baretta had not the remotest idea what time it was, but he fancied that it must be long past midnight. The noises of the street were few, although the windows were open. To be sure, traffic

was not very heavy in that neighbourhood after nightfall; but there were enough loungers about, and they were usually fully in evidence. He threw up his arms impatiently, and the sharp pain in his injured shoulder made him cry aloud. At this moment the door opened, and his cry seemed to be echoed by some one coming in.

"Frank, dear, where are you? Oh, how dark it is!"

"Maud! Is it you?"

"Wait until I strike a light." Ditton fumbled about the mantel-piece as he spoke, and presently a tiny blue flame penetrated the darkness. He crossed the room, protecting its feeble glimmer by a covering hand. "I couldn't keep her away, Baretta. She insisted on coming back with me."

"But Maud—so late as this!" Her hand was in his now, and she was bending over to kiss him, with a little sob, half of pity, half of alarm, as she saw by the gaslight how pale he was. "Oh, Frank! how could they do it!"

"It isn't very late—it's only ten o'clock," said Ditton. "But I couldn't have kept her away if it had been midnight." He smiled somewhat grimly, and then, as neither spoke, went to the door. "I guess you don't want me," he added, as he left them together.

"But your father—how is he?" asked Baretta, regarding the girl anxiously. "Is he much hurt?"

"Don't speak of him!" she cried, angrily. "Oh, I never want to see him or hear his name again. He would have killed you if he could—he said so. I'm glad you hit him first—perhaps he won't be so fresh another time."

"I was afraid I'd killed him. What could I do, though, with the whole crowd against me?"

"I hate him—oh, how I hate them all!" Maud had sprung to her feet, and she now stood looking down at him with flashing eyes. "You mustn't ever come to that house again. You must stay away, and—and, oh, Frank! let me stay with you."

"Maud! Maud! You don't know what you're saying. How could that be?"

"Well, I suppose you don't want me. You're thinking that *she* wouldn't say a thing like that. But I don't care—I'll never

go back there! I'll walk the streets first! Perhaps," she added with a bitter laugh, "that's what I'll have to do if you turn me out."

"Turn you out? I'm likely to do that, lying here!"

"I'll go the moment you speak the word," said Maud, with a queer assumption of dignity, "but be sure I'll never come back to bother you."

Baretta sighed impatiently. It was all very well to have a girl so fond of you, but there were times when it was embarrassing. He was not anxious to have any more trouble with Dolan, and he knew what construction that irate father would put upon his further association with Maud. Still, he could not tell her to go; that would be ungrateful after all she had sacrificed in coming to him. He could imagine Dolan's rage when he discovered what she had done; perhaps the door would be shut in her face even if she went back now. But to stay here—to defy even the none too rigid moral sentiment of Arragon Street—that was something which was not to be thought of. He might send out for a clergyman and marry her on the spot. She would think there was something romantic in that, in spite of the obvious inconveniences involved.

"We had better ask Mr. Ditton," he said, at last.

"Mr. Ditton! What can he tell us that we don't know."

"But, Maud, you don't understand, you don't see—"

"I see all there is to see, Frank. You don't want me—that's plain enough. Well, I was a fool for coming." She turned away to hide the tears that rose to her eyes.

"Oh, I want you—indeed I do. I appreciate your goodness in coming; there isn't one girl in a thousand who would have cared as much as that. And Heaven knows I want to take you away from that place as soon as I can! I'd like to marry you this moment, Maud, and go away somewhere, and never see one of them again—no, not a single soul I know. I've been giving my whole life to them, and this is what has come of it. But I can't—I won't—let you sacrifice your good name by leaving your home for me until—until I can give you a better one. Don't you see, Maud? It's because I love you that I want you to go back, if only for a few days."

"That's all very fine, Frank, but I'll never, never set foot in that house again! Do you hear me?" she cried, stamping her foot angrily. "Never—never, so long as I live!"

"Well, I suppose you'll do as you like," said Baretta. He turned irritably upon his pillow, and the movement elicited a stifled cry of pain.

"Oh, are you so badly hurt? And I am making it worse by talking to you! That's just like me." She bent over the bed with an anxious look as she spoke.

"I don't feel much like quarrelling with you, to be sure. But no—no! I'm not much hurt. Don't fuss over me, whatever you do."

"I guess you're sorry I came," said Maud, with a rather bitter laugh. "I might have known how it would be. Well, here's Mr. Ditton now," she added, as the door opened. "He'll take me back, I suppose."

"Then you will go back?" asked Baretta.

"Back—yes; but not there."

"I guess we've talked enough to our patient," said Ditton, coming forward. "Of course you'll go home, Miss Maud. I feel responsible for you, since I brought you here."

"I'd have come without any bringing, and I'll go away again. I ain't the kind to stay where they don't want me."

"Sh, sh!" said Ditton, softly. "Don't say anything to excite him. Just bid him good-night. Miss Dolan is going now, Baretta. She wants to say good-night to you." He turned away with the notion that the girl wished to kiss her lover, and might not like to do it while he was looking on.

"Yes, I only want to say good-night, Frank." Maud touched his forehead gently with her hand, but she did not offer to kiss him. "I hope you'll feel much better in the morning."

"But, Maud, you'll come back then? And you'll go home now?"

"I guess there ain't much telling what I'll do, is there, Mr. Ditton?" Her laugh was a joyless one, and her eyes had in them an expression more of crying than of laughing. "Oh, you needn't mind bothering with me," she added, as Ditton took up his hat.

But Ditton held the door open with something of his habitual air of authority, and the girl allowed him to follow her from the room without any further protest.

Baretta sighed again as the door closed behind them. It was very kind of Maud to come, as he had told her, and yet he somehow wished that she had stayed away. He recognized the fact that her claim upon him was one important factor in the problem which now confronted him, but he nevertheless felt inclined to eliminate it for the present—at least, in imagination. He certainly could do nothing to help her until he was able to help himself. Of course she must recognize the folly of leaving her home at this crisis, with no other place to go to. He was willing to marry her some day, although for the present that day seemed a long way off. What he feared was that she would not be willing to wait—that she would do something rash to compromise them both and lead them into some dilemma, either means of escape out of which would be perilous. It was just like her to come away from Arragon Street with Ditton and declare that she would never go back. But how was he to support a wife, lying here bruised and beaten, and cut off irrevocably—he recognized that—from all the old associations? Twenty dollars from the *Mail*, and after that perhaps nothing! It was not a brilliant outlook for youthful genius, which has to live in just the same fashion as ordinary humanity. Baretta had no doubt as to his ultimate success, but he hardly saw his way clear to support himself meanwhile on anticipation. The worst of it was that all the people who were interested in his work, who would read his writings and come to his lectures, were out of town, and would not return for several months yet. They had gone to Europe—and to Beverly and such places—to forget the wants of the complaining millions, of whom this young man now felt himself in truth to be one. As to the editor of the *Mail*, perhaps he would not care for any more letters; Baretta knew well enough that “space work” was uncertain, although remunerative, and that unless a man had more than one newspaper to depend upon his income was likely to be slender as well as irregular. Altogether it was a very gloomy outlook as he viewed it, lying in this dim and dingy room alone and in

pain, and without a friend in the world—except Maud, of course; she was something more than a friend. But Maud could do nothing for him—nothing at least which could be of any use to him. And she might do so much harm—not meaning it, but carelessly and impulsively, and with the best intentions in the world, which would make it all the harder to bear. This was the last thought in Baretta's mind before he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIV

DAISY IS GLAD TO SEE PHILIP

THE breeze had died down since morning, and it was so light that, although every stitch of canvas was set, the yacht moved over the shining stretch of sea slowly and with only a faint ripple of water at her bows. The sun was so hot that Yates, who was at the helm, was glad to have the protection of the huge white main-sail, in the shadow of which he was sitting. He had the deck all to himself; the others had gone below after luncheon in a drowsy mood, and were now stretched out in the cabin asleep. Now and then a faint rattle from the tiny compartment forward, which was dignified by the name of galley, reminded him that the man of all work—mate, steward, seaman; he might be called all three—was still busy with the pots and pans.

The *Princess of Thule* was a sloop-rigged boat—a “forty-six-footer” in racing parlance, although she was built rather for cruising than for racing, her sail area being comparatively small, and her spars and other fittings being of the substantial kind which will stand rough weather. Her owner, compelled to make a flying trip across the Atlantic, had loaned her for a few weeks to Yates and his friends—two men, who like himself were familiar figures at the Pilgrim Club—and this was the fourth day of their trip. They had started out from Boston harbour the day after the great national holiday—for it was now July, and an oppressive season of heat brooded over all the Eastern coast—and had taken a run to Plymouth, thence to Provincetown; now they were heading across the bay to Marblehead, from which place they proposed to sail north-easterly to

the Shoals, to Mount Desert, and as far as the waters of the Passamaquoddy. On this warm afternoon the horizon was dim with haze, and although the *Princess of Thule* was now not many miles from Marblehead, she might as well have been in mid-ocean for all that could be seen from her deck. Occasionally the flash of some distant sail in the sunlight met the roving eye; but that was all; except that once Philip, looking southward, saw the long line of black smoke left by an outgoing ocean steamship. This vague and mysterious silence—this isolation from the world—was on the whole rather grateful to him. There were many things which he wanted to forget; so at least he told himself. Nevertheless, he often took a kind of mournful pleasure in remembering them. Inconsistencies of this sort are not uncommon to poor humanity, although novelists and historians have taken a great deal of trouble in trying to explain them away. Philip believed that he was rapidly reaching a state of mind which would enable him to think of Mildred Lawrence with indifference, although everything that reminded him of her still had its association of discontent. He had quite given up hoping that she would ever forgive him. He did not think that his offence ought to be considered irreparable, but since she evidently considered it so, he understood well enough that there was nothing more to be said. Perhaps he might have been angry with her, and thus have forgotten her more easily, had it not been for her confession that she still loved him. He himself thought of love as always meaning forgiveness. Women, however, had a great many strange ideas. One of Mildred's strange ideas had been the belief that he was capable of great achievements. Why she should ever have held it, he could not imagine. He knew that he was clever enough in a way, but cleverness is too common a quality nowadays to call for much remark. If a man had only the courage he could make more of a reputation by becoming phenomenally stupid. Women have done that, but the masculine intellect is not capable of such subtleties. Just at present Philip was not even trying to be clever. He had locked up his rooms in Livingstone Place and had come away from the city in disgust. Of what use were his amateurish efforts to win literary distinction when even his book

reviews for the *Mail* were pronounced by the editor hardly up to the mark? Idleness was more profitable than that kind of industry. Here in this shining world of sky and sea a man could sometimes forget that he had ever been ambitious, and let life drift by as it would.

"You don't look as if you were enjoying it very much, Yates." It was young Lawrence Harding who spoke, surveying him from the companionway. "We seem to be running into a dead calm," he added, as the sail gave an ominous flap.

"You are so confoundedly cheerful yourself, Lawrence," said Philip.

"I have to be cheerful enough for two when you're around." He came aft, yawning. "Ain't you tired of this? We might as well let her drift."

Philip gave the wheel into Harding's hands without a word, and gazed blankly over the dead surface of the water. "I dare say I'm tired of everything," he muttered.

"Oh, I say, Phil!" cried Harding. "You ought to take a brace. It's no good brooding over things."

Yates turned and looked at him sharply. "See here, Lawrence," he said, "I like you, but there are some matters I don't want you to talk about."

"What matters? Your long face?" asked the young man with a laugh. He was related to the Lawrences—his mother and Sibley Lawrence were cousins—and he knew very well of what the other was thinking. He was not offended by Philip's brusqueness, because, as he afterwards told George Linley, the third member of their party, the poor devil had been hard hit. He had very little patience with Mildred, who, if she couldn't appreciate a thoroughly good fellow, deserved never to marry at all. But he did not put the case in this way just then.

"That's the worst of a sailboat," Philip went on after a moment. "You can't get anywhere when you want to."

"Oh, well, what's the hurry? Jack won't want his boat for a month. When a fellow goes over there he always stays longer than he expects."

But to this Philip made no reply. Instead, he went forward,

and presently stretched himself out at full length on the deck, gazing upward into vacancy.

It was no wonder that young Harding should afterwards confide to Linley his opinion that Yates had been hard hit, expressing at the same time a sarcastic wish to see the girl who could break him up like that.

"I call it a deuced shame," said Linley. "Oh, I beg your pardon."

"Don't mind, because she's my cousin, George; I gave her my opinion some time ago. She won't hardly speak to me now."

"Women are a queer lot, anyway," said Linley, philosophically. It was evening, and the sun was going down upon a glassy sea. Hardly a breath of air could be felt, and the great sail lay useless like a broken wing. "See how that match burns—not a flicker," he added as he lit his pipe. "I dare say we'll have to stay where we are until morning. I'd like to get into Marblehead, if only to stretch my legs a bit. Yes, they're a queer lot," he continued, watching the smoke curl slowly upward. "There's my sister, now; what can you make out of a girl like that, who goes to the Annex and takes honours in mathematics? What good is analytics to her? Didn't you get conditioned in them the Freshman year? I did, anyway. Hullo, Yates! Why don't you throw away that beastly cigarette and have a pipe? Lawry and I have just agreed that we can't understand girls."

Philip reddened with the consciousness that this conclusion had been the result of a discussion of his own experience. But he merely said, "Well, that ought to save you a good deal of worry."

"Oh, we like them just as much; in fact, it's the mystery that makes them charming. Don't you know how quickly a married man gets over any sentimental fondness for his wife?"

"You're a hardened man of the world, George—we all know that."

"I dare say you mean that for chaff, Yates," retorted Linley, good-humouredly.

But the discussion of the baffling problem of the Ewig-

Weibliche was dropped at this point. It was really a more interesting question just then to know when they would get to Marblehead. There was no answering it that night, however. Linley and Harding sat up until past twelve o'clock over their pipes and beer, while Philip, whose watch on deck it was to be until the man relieved him at four, turned in for a few hours of sleep below. At that time the black surface of the sea scarcely moved, except with the slow swinging motion of the ebbing tide. But as the eastern sky began to lighten a fresh breeze sprang up, and before Philip went below again he could see streaks of rippling shadow on the gray waste of waters.

It was finally a good stiff breeze which carried them into Marblehead early in the forenoon, and the wind was blowing half a gale when they started out again late in the afternoon.

"We shall get plenty of it to-night," said Linley. And indeed it looked that way, as the little vessel dashed forward bravely into the tumbling waves, flinging the spray from her bows. It was from the east that this stiff breeze came, and they were running into it close-hauled, making a long tack a little to the south.

"Now she begins to show up to advantage," observed Harding, scanning the yacht critically from bowsprit to top-mast. "She isn't much good in a light breeze, but in weather like this she's a dandy."

"Oh yes, she'll do very well," said Linley. "But I think *Madcap* could beat her. Have you ever been out in her?"

"*Madcap*—that's Carver's boat, isn't it?" asked Yates.

"*Madcap*!" cried young Harding. "Why, she simply isn't in it with the *Princess*. Anyway, she's a bigger boat—a seventy-footer, ain't she, Yates?"

"If it's Carver's boat, I should think she was more than that."

"Oh yes—Carver still owns *Madcap*," said Harding. "I think he and his wife took a long cruise in her last fall—went to the Mediterranean or somewhere."

"Nonsense—a woman crossing the ocean in a sailboat?"

"Oh, Mrs. Carver would go anywhere; she's just the jolly sort of woman I like," declared Harding. "There's no foolish-

ness about her—as there is about most girls,” he added, sagely.

Linley laughed. “Wait till one of them catches you, my boy.”

But Lawrence Harding, who was still a very young man, smiled contemptuously at the thought of any woman who could catch him. That the chief feminine pursuit was masculine game he did not for a moment doubt.

“You’ll find girls enough at the Shoals,” put in Yates, presently, looking up from the paper he was reading. It was a copy of the morning’s *Mail* which he had bought at Marblehead.

“Shoals of them—eh, George?” asked Lawrence, making this atrocious jest with an unabashed countenance.

But Linley very properly ignored his friend’s would-be wit. “My sister is there, for one,” he said, “if you can call an Annex girl who has taken honours in mathematics a girl at all. And so is Daisy Tredwell.”

“Daisy Tredwell? Oh, I like her immensely. She’s the jolly sort, too.”

“Well, you look out for her then, Lawry, because she’s a con-founded little flirt.”

“She’s no worse than the rest,” said Lawrence. “What do you say, Yates?”

“How’s that?” asked Philip, looking up from his paper. “I didn’t hear what you said.”

“I couldn’t find anything to interest me,” observed Lawrence, “not even in the report of yesterday’s game.”

“Oh, well, I was reading an item about a fellow I know which—which amused me a good deal.” But truth to tell the expression upon his face was not precisely one of amusement.

“Let us have the joke, then,” said Linley.

“I dare say you don’t know him—it is of no particular account, after all,” said Philip, folding up the paper and thrusting it in his pocket. “He’s a queer sort, but clever; the *Mail* is glad to print his stuff, at any rate,” Philip added, with a curious sense of personal injury. “Only if you knew him you would be amused to hear that he was a stray baron in disguise.”

"What has he been—a waiter or a barber?" asked Lawrence, jocosely.

"He's been a Socialist."

"By Jove! I wonder if it's the fellow my sister was talking about one day," broke in Linley. "She met him at some literary feed or other. I don't remember where; I never pay much attention to those things. But she was telling about a Socialist whom she wanted to have come and talk some rot or other at our house, and then didn't want because he was too much off colour even for her taste. It must be the man."

"Oh yes—I fancy it was Baretta," said Philip. "He's beginning to go to 'literary feeds,' as you call them—though where there's the most literary provender there's the least substantial food."

"Daisy Tredwell goes in for that kind of thing," said Harding. "She thinks they're great fun. She was telling me about Mrs. Chilton's afternoons. But I should think Mrs. Chilton might be rather a jolly sort, too. I dare say you know her, Yates."

"What's this about Baretta—is that his name?" asked Linley.

"If you are so much interested in him I'll read you what the *Mail* says about him," replied Philip, pulling the paper from his pocket. "Oh, here it is. 'Readers of the interesting series of letters on Socialism in the *Mail*, by Francis Baretta, will be interested to learn that Mr. Baretta, who is recovering from his recent severe illness and whose interesting sketch of the Socialist preacher Ditton is printed in another column, is a Hungarian of the noble family of Smolzow, a name familiar in Magyar annals, and the rightful inheritor of the title of Baron Smolzow—his father, a cousin of the late baron, having come to this country during the troubles in 1848.' What will your sister think of Baretta now, Linley?"

"Oh, when she takes a dislike you can't convince her. She'll probably insist that he's no baron at all."

"As to that, I confess I have my own doubts. But no," added Philip, quickly, "that's hardly fair. I have no reason for disputing it."

Nevertheless, when he came to think it over, he could not dismiss quite so easily his feeling of incredulity. He could not escape the conviction that Baretta was not a gentleman, although he would have hesitated to put this conviction into words. How could Mildred endure him? That was the question which he was asking himself. The thought occurred to him once more that perhaps Baretta had exaggerated his intimacy with the Lawrences. No doubt they had been kind to him. Sibley Lawrence was always picking up protégés at those Workingmen's Clubs and Mutual Improvement Unions; his philanthropy was perfectly indiscriminating. But a man had no right to take every clever adventurer into his house, especially when he had a young and pretty daughter. If Mrs. Lawrence had lived it would have been quite different. Philip could understand why Mildred should find a good many of her natural associates stupid and should want to go to houses like Mrs. Chilton's, where the intellectual atmosphere, if not always the most exhilarating, was at least not dense. Philip did not know Mrs. Chilton, but he had been to enough teas and "evenings" to know how semi-Bohemian, semi-fashionable Boston conducts itself on such occasions. They varied from the decorous receptions of Mrs. Cadwallader, the wife of the celebrated artist, to the fearful revels held on Sunday nights by Mrs. Grayling, the wife of the learned professor of paleontology, where the women drank beer and smoked cigarettes with the men. He was sure that Mildred would not care for the beer and the cigarettes—indeed, she did not like Mrs. Grayling at all; but he understood exactly how meeting artists and musicians and actors and actresses and literary people would amuse her much more than going to the elaborate "social functions"—that was what they were called in the society papers—of her own set. Nevertheless, she ought to remember what her position was and be chary of unwise intimacies. As for Baretta—what was this rot about his being Baron Smolzow? It was probably some absurd story devised by the *Mail*—newspapers nowadays were always up to that sort of thing. The story seemed more incredible to Philip because Baretta had never said much of anything to him concerning his reputed ancestry. This may have been because the

occasion had never arisen, or it may have been because Baretta could not at the time see any especial advantage in it. The young man was, as we have seen, anxious to avoid the reproach of making his way by false pretences, and when he allowed the Lawrences to draw false deductions it was rather from anxiety to meet the standards by which they judged people than from a wilful determination to deceive them. Philip's good-will soon came to have little importance to him, although he had been flattered by his notice at first. But when a man has begun to get on, why should he waste any time upon those who can no longer help him?

So Francis Baretta was Baron Smolzow! The idea in all its incongruity kept forcing itself into Philip's mind, while he half listened to the desultory talk of his companions, gazing seaward all the time, and bracing himself firmly as he stood by the wheel and held the staggering yacht to her course. Philip smiled rather bitterly as he thought how much a title would mean to the young man. All sorts of doors would be open to him now that had hitherto been tightly closed against him. It could not be a mere adventurer's trick to gain recognition; he might dislike Baretta, but he would not accuse him of that. If the story in the *Mail* were not an idle romance, it must have some substantial basis—there must be proofs of its truth. Well, it was a strange revolution of Fortune's wheel. For one thing, it would probably dispel the young man's dreams of a coming order of social equality; the concrete is so much more convincing than the abstract. Philip found himself vaguely wondering what Baretta would do, what form his elevation would take. It was curious how the subject interested him. Baron Smolzow! Perhaps it was an empty title, and brought nothing more substantial with it than a little temporary glory. A baron who had to work for his living, and who occupied a dingy room in a squalid street with a drunken Irishman for a landlord, was worse off than if he were no baron at all. Philip had never been in Arragon Street, but after his conversation with Dolan at the Socialist Club he could imagine precisely how depressing Baretta's surroundings must be. Poor devil! The ungenerous feeling of envy gave way to one of compassion. But still the re-

membrance of Baretta's allusions to Mildred Lawrence vexed him.

"We had better run straight out and not try to make the Shoals before morning—what do you say, Yates?" Linley's voice interrupted his reflections, and he turned with a sigh to answer him.

"Oh yes—just as you like," he said. "It will be pretty rough to-night; perhaps we had better put back into Marblehead."

"Pooh! who minds a little blow like this? I think we'd better run down the flying-jib, though, and take another reef in the main-sail. And, I say, I'm getting hungry. Isn't it about dinner-time?"

The cosy little cabin presented a very cheerful aspect when presently they were all three sitting about the table, Peter, the mate (this was what they called him when he was on deck), having taken the helm. Philip quite regained his good spirits before the meal was over. It was not in his nature to be morose, however great his private griefs. And, besides, he was really beginning to accept Mildred's decree of perpetual banishment with something like resignation. The beautiful past was over forever; he would make the most of the present. If he must feel his grief as a man he could also endure it like one.

Then, after a wild, tumultuous night came a fair, shining morning with a steady breeze from the south-west, before which the *Princess of Thule* sped buoyantly on her course, plunging and dipping with the slowly subsiding swell of huge green waves that the gale had created. Surely this was not a time for vain regrets! They could now see the tall shaft of White Island Light on the clear horizon, and all about them were the sails of the fishing fleet making for Gloucester. A mile or two off the starboard bow a steam-yacht was steadily pushing its way eastward. It was a day to make one grateful for the gift of mere existence. And how could any one enjoy it more than Philip was doing? He even joined with young Harding in chaffing Linley about some imaginary Dulcinea, and declared that he knew very well it was not anxiety to see his sister which had brought that young man to the Shoals. "We shall have to stay at least a week on your account, George," he said.

"More likely on Lawry's," said Linley, indifferently. "Didn't you hear him saying that he thought Daisy Tredwell was a jolly sort of girl?"

"Oh, there's nothing sentimental in the wind between us," declared Lawrence. "But she is jolly, just the same. I like a girl who has some sense and doesn't expect too much."

"Lawry has a way of disappointing people who expect much from him, you see," said Linley, cynically. "He disappointed Georgiana—but she has learned to look for that from my friends. I say, Yates, what humbug it is for a girl to go in for the higher education and all that sort of thing."

The *Princess of Thule* now got into smoother water under the low-lying rocks of Appledore, but for a time it seemed doubtful if they would be able to make a landing at the pier. They could see that an interested group of spectators, mostly women, had gathered there. Presently they could make out one or two whom they knew—Daisy Tredwell among them. One could always recognize Daisy quickly; perhaps it was because she had such brilliant golden hair. Lawrence Harding, who was swinging his legs over the bowsprit, took off his cap and waved it, and Daisy fluttered her handkerchief. Then Philip looked again, and his heart gave a great leap. Was not that Mildred herself? Certainly he had seen a figure that reminded him of her standing by Miss Tredwell's side. No, no—what folly to think of it! Why should she be here? There was a movement among the people on the pier, and even Daisy herself seemed to disappear for a moment. And as the yacht came closer and closer the figure that had reminded Philip of Mildred was no more to be seen.

But this was a strange thing which Daisy did when at last the young men had landed at Appledore. For to Linley and Harding she merely nodded and said, "Oh, we have been expecting you," with her mischievous little laugh. But there was a hint of something else than laughter in her bright blue eyes as she turned to Philip and gave him her hand. "I am so very glad you came with them," Daisy said.

CHAPTER XV

DAISY'S STRATAGEM

"Oh, I don't want you to interrupt me; I want to talk to Mr. Yates."

"But, I say, Miss Tredwell!" remonstrated young Harding. "Do you intend to cut a fellow altogether?"

"Yes—if he persists in being a nuisance," said Daisy, with a laugh.

"I don't understand you," declared the young man, frowning.

"Of course not; how could one expect that you would?"

"Oh, very well, Miss Tredwell, if my room is better than my company, as I plainly see—"

"Don't be so silly!" interrupted Daisy, laughing again. "You will understand—some day." And she went over to the corner of the piazza where Yates was sitting alone, leaving Harding utterly mystified. Even the radiant glance, half serious, half malicious, which she cast at him over her shoulder did not in the least enlighten him. Yates! Why the deuce should she make a dead set at Yates? It was absurd—it was unmaidenly. So Harding walked away in a very sulky mood.

But Miss Tredwell was serious enough when she came up to speak to Philip. Indeed, she blushed a little as he lifted his cap and rose to greet her, and for a moment she stood looking at him rather stupidly. "I—I wanted so much to see you," was what she said at last. And then she blushed again more deeply.

Philip had been conscious of the warmth of her greeting on the pier, earlier in the day. "I am so very glad you came with them," she had said. This was flattering, no doubt, but

why should Miss Tredwell care so much more for his coming than for the coming of the others? It might have been Lawry, or even George Linley, that she wished especially to see; that would have been intelligible enough, although even then one would hardly have expected her to admit it so frankly. But why him? That was what Philip could not make out. She had not explained her meaning at the moment, and he soon forgot to puzzle over it. Now again she emphasized her gladness at seeing him; which was something he did not even try to make out at all. Of course, Daisy and he had always been good friends, although perhaps her intimate association in his mind with Mildred had made him avoid rather than seek her society of late.

"Ah, it is worth while to be told that," said Philip, looking at Daisy and wondering why she blushed.

"You mustn't flatter yourself too much—don't let it make you conceited." Her embarrassment, whatever was the cause of it, had vanished, and she was once more her frank, audacious self. "One welcomes almost any prospect of diversion, you know, at a place like this."

"Ah, now you are taking down my conceit with a vengeance!"

"Perhaps you're not so very conceited, after all," said Daisy. "At all events, I'm going to hope you're not, because I came to ask you if you didn't want to explore the island with me before dinner?"

"How can you doubt but that I should be most happy?"

"Does it shock you that I should ask, Mr. Yates? Well, you know, I have a reason."

"A woman's reason?" he asked, smiling.

"What is a woman's reason? something absurd? I shall leave you to find it out, whatever it is."

"That will at least give me something to do. Shall we start on our trip at once?"

"Oh, it won't be a long one." They walked down the long piazza together, but just as they were about to go up the hill behind the hotel Daisy turned to him rather doubtfully. "Are you sure you have nothing else that you want to do?" she asked.

"Quite sure. How could there be anything that I wanted to do more?"

"I didn't ask for compliments."

"Well, you must be used to receiving them without the asking."

"Oh, you are incorrigible!" Daisy cried. "You haven't changed a bit."

"Haven't I?" Philip smiled rather bitterly as he spoke, knowing how much the world had changed for him, although a frivolous girl could see nothing of it. The reflection was unjust to Daisy, but man's conceptions of woman from the social point of view usually are unjust. There are complexities in her nature which it is not for him to fathom. Philip despised the fashion of wearing one's heart upon one's sleeve, but yet he was somewhat provoked with Daisy for not understanding just a little how much he had suffered. She was Mildred's intimate friend, to be sure, but nevertheless she might have offered him a degree of tacit sympathy, especially since she had shown so plainly that she wished still to be his friend as well.

"No—not the least," said Daisy. They had climbed the low ascent, and now were surveying from its summit the broad surface of the sea, out of which these grim and desolate ledges arose, with ragged bases of rock which gave a touch of sternness even to the rich greensward and the brilliant flower-gardens in the heart of the island.

"It must be a cheerful place in winter," observed Philip.

"It's dull enough at all times. How long will you stay with us?"

"That's as the others say. You must try your powers of persuasion upon them."

"I? Why should I care whether they stay or go?"

"I think we are to start out again this evening."

"This evening? Oh!" cried Daisy. Then she added, with a fine assumption of dignity, "How could one really expect you to stay in such a stupid place?"

"As I am forbidden to pay compliments, I really cannot answer that question."

But Daisy had turned to gaze seaward, and Philip was not

sure that she heard this last remark. He thought for a moment that her eyes had filled suddenly, as if with tears. But this was a supposition so absurd that he dismissed it instantly. Nevertheless, there was something about her whole manner that he could not in the least understand.

"I think it's rather silly to walk about like this, after all—don't you?" she said, presently. And as she faced him he saw very clearly that she was smiling. "There's the little steamer coming that makes the trip around the islands. Wouldn't you like to go? Have you ever been on Star Island? The rocks there are really worth seeing."

"You have only to command, Miss Tredwell."

"Have I? I wish I could believe that." This time her lips trembled a little, but not with a smile. Philip saw, too, that her face was very pale.

"But are you not too tired to go? I don't want you to sacrifice yourself for me," said he.

"Is that a way of saying that you don't care to go yourself? Oh, of course you don't—how rude I have been! I don't know what's the matter with me this afternoon."

"How can I convince you that your suspicions are unjust, Daisy?" he asked. "I used to call you that, you know—forgive me for letting the name slip out in the old familiar way."

Daisy laughed, this time with genuine merriment. "I think we're a pair of fools, Philip. Why shouldn't we be just as good friends as we ever were? I'm going around the islands, and—and you can come if you like."

And indeed was it not much like old times to be sitting here in this tiny craft by Daisy's side? Philip had always liked Daisy immensely, although she was not in the least the kind of girl he would want to marry. If she had been, he might not have liked her half so well. She was not remarkable in any way—not for beauty, nor for wit, nor for anything at all. People spoke of her as a rather pretty girl with red hair, who attracted the young men by her good spirits. As Lawrence Harding had said, she was "a jolly sort," which phrase was perhaps more expressive than any other would have been. Daisy's good spirits seemed fully to have returned to her now, as she sat in the stern

of this ridiculous little steamer with Philip. It was a wonderful afternoon—never was the sun brighter or the water bluer—and this radiant little figure seemed to Philip somehow to be a part of it.

"Would you really like to land and walk over to the rocks?" asked Daisy, as the boat ran up alongside the pier at Star Island. "They're quite worth seeing, if one has never been. And, besides—" then she stopped abruptly.

"Besides what?" asked Philip. "Of course I should like to see the rocks. I am enjoying this trip more than anything else. But what did you mean by 'besides'?"

"Oh, nothing—really nothing," replied Daisy, laughing, and yet with a conscious air which did not escape his notice. "Let us turn to the right and avoid that staring crowd at the hotel. Don't you hate a staring crowd?"

"I am never stared at—when I am alone."

"Really? Are you so sure of that? If you would come to Mrs. Chilton's some day I would promise you plenty of attention."

"Ah, but I am not a celebrity, as every one else who goes there is."

"Well, wouldn't that be a good reason for staring at you? That's why I get any notice. Do come—I mean it in earnest. You are an author, you know."

"Please don't be sarcastic, Daisy. Mrs. Chilton will have higher game to bring down next winter. Why, I think that even Mrs. Cadwallader, who is rather particular, will want a real baron. I think I will earn her lasting gratitude by introducing him."

"A real baron? Whom do you mean?"

"Haven't you met him? He's been at Mrs. Chilton's. Oh, you must have met Baretta."

"Mr. Baretta!" cried Daisy. "That person! Oh, *you* surely don't believe that foolish story, too."

"I, too! Why, have you seen it in the papers already?" asked Philip. He regretted now his introduction of Baretta's name, partly because he thought that it might be associated with Mildred's in Miss Tredwell's mind no less than in his own. And

although he had been blaming her for not sympathizing with him, he felt just now as if sympathy, however delicately expressed, were what he could not bear.

"The papers? I have seen nothing in the papers. But that was what they said about him at the first. I wouldn't believe them—I don't now. But do you know him? Oh, perhaps he is a friend of yours."

"No, he is no friend of mine. I have met him—only as Francis Baretta, not as Baron Smolzow."

"Baron Smolzow! How ridiculous! So he actually has the presumption at last to invent a title for himself."

"Oh, I can't say that he invented it. But, then, what does it matter to us? A fellow must get on in one way or another."

"Baron Smolzow!" said Daisy again, with a disdainful expression. "Oh, I have no patience with her!" Then she added, rather breathlessly, and with a quick look at her companion, "With Mrs. Chilton, I mean."

"Yes," was all Philip said. Yet he had grown a trifle pale, and his eyes had an absent expression as they swept the far horizon. He was not deceived by Daisy's explanation. He knew only too well whom she had in mind, and the knowledge cost him an almost intolerable pang of anguish. It was true, then, that she—the woman he had loved, and for whom he was not good enough—was really interested in that adventurer, really cared for a fellow who was not even a gentleman! He thought he had steeled himself to his separation from her, but this suspicion seemed to make it more intolerable than ever.

"But Mr. Baretta—I won't admit that he is a baron at all—is hardly worth talking about, is he? Can't you tell me something about yourself instead? I am interested in what you do, and it is so long since I have had a talk with you."

"I thank you for the interest; but I am doing nothing. I never did much, you know; but even that little seems to be impossible to me."

Daisy stole a pitying glance at him as he said this. Yes, Mildred had treated him very badly—much worse than he deserved, she was sure, whatever he had done. It will be remembered that she had not hesitated to tell Mildred so; which, per-

haps, was not the wisest way to convince her, after all, since there is nothing like opposition to confirm one in one's opinions. But now Daisy only said, "I am sure there are many people, Philip, who believe in you."

Yates was immensely touched by this confession of faith. Only a moment ago he had felt that he could not endure to let even her see how painful his wound still was, and yet now he was conscious of an almost irresistible impulse to give her the confidence which he felt sure she would respect. But all he could say was, "Thank you," which seemed to him a stupid acknowledgment of her kindness.

They had now reached the jagged ledges of rock which form the western side of the island, and for a time nothing more was said by either as they picked their way cautiously from one treacherous foothold to another. As they descended behind the frowning crest of one irregular summit they found themselves apparently alone in this wild and desolate world of gray crags beaten furiously by the upleaping waves at their base. On both sides sheer walls arose and hemmed them in, and below the cliff fell away abruptly in broken masses. And before them, as far as eye could reach, stretched the limitless plain of the sea. Daisy was the first to speak.

"It is a favourite spot of ours—I mean of mine," she said. "There is nothing so lovely on Appledore. But I—I—" Here suddenly she hesitated, and Philip, looking at her, saw that she was regarding something beyond them in a frightened way.

"What is it?" he began. Then he turned and confronted Mildred Lawrence. She was very pale, and she trembled visibly, but after one quick glance she averted her face.

"Oh, Mildred!" cried Daisy. "Why, how you frightened us—it was as if you had risen right out of the sea. Why, we didn't know there was a soul anywhere about. Where were you—behind that rock? Is that your book you have dropped?"

Philip stooped to pick up the volume; then he handed it to Mildred mechanically, without a word. "Thank you," she said. And she turned to go.

"Oh, Mildred!" cried Daisy, desperately.

The girl looked at her angrily. She knew now what her

friend had done, why she had brought Philip here. But she could not reproach her then. "I think it must be almost dinner-time," she said, coldly, and sprang up the tortuous path towards the summit of the cliff, leaving the other two staring blankly at each other.

Philip, too, had begun to realize the full significance of this meeting. Daisy's exclamation had enlightened him, although not so quickly as it had enlightened Mildred. But now he recalled those chance phrases of hers which had puzzled him at the time, and he began to understand them. His first emotion was also one of anger. It was a silly trick—just what might be expected of a girl like Daisy Tredwell.

"Did you know she was here?" he asked, sternly.

"Why, Philip, I—I thought—"

"Did you know she was here?"

"You're just as mean as you can be—both of you!" Then she sat down, and hid her face in her hands and sobbed.

All men hate to see a woman cry. It is a thoroughly illogical argument, but it inevitably puts them in the wrong. So when Philip spoke again it was in a gentler tone. "I beg your pardon," he said; "I dare say you don't understand what you have done."

The only reply to this was further sobs.

"I can't do more than beg your pardon," said Philip. Then he, too, sat down and looked gloomily out over the tumbling, sparkling waves. Their very brightness seemed to mock him. It was like going back to the grave of one who is dead to come face to face with Mildred Lawrence in that way, and realize with a sharpness only possible in her presence how impassable was the gulf between them. It was her figure, then, that he had seen upon the pier that morning; his eyes had not deceived him. What accursed fate was it that led him to the very place which of all others he would have avoided if he had known? And of course she would blame him! She would think that he had come with Daisy expecting to find her, and perhaps hoping that some vulgar "scene" would set everything right. What a hideous suspicion for her to cherish, who thought so badly of him even as it was! His heart was hot with rage against the

intermeddler who had placed him in such a position. And the fellows on the yacht—they, too, would know that Mildred was here, and they would talk everything over behind his back. This was a ridiculously petty annoyance to be concerned about, at such a time, but it had a sting for him perhaps hardly less sharp at the moment than that much greater grief. Confound all officious women! who could never be happy unless they were trying to act the part of a special providence, and who never learned anything from failure.

Presently he was conscious of the rustle of a woman's dress, and he looked up to find Daisy standing beside him. She was no longer crying, but her face wore a penitent expression which melted him a little in spite of himself. "I am so sorry," she said.

"It is I who should be sorry; I had no business to speak to you in that way." He rose wearily, but turned once more to look at those mocking waters. Daisy, with a womanly instinct of sympathy, laid her hand gently on his. "Oh, Daisy, if you knew how hard it is!" cried he, with a despairing groan. At last his resolution to bear his hurt in silence had broken down; that touch had somehow unmanned him.

"Philip," said Daisy, her eyes filling with tears again, "I meant to be your friend—I meant to help you. I did, indeed!"

The young man made no reply, but he held her hand in his a moment.

"And—and Philip! I shall help you yet!"

"You are very kind to me," he said at last, gravely. "Shall we go now?"

CHAPTER XVI

THE NOBLE HOUSE OF SMOLZOW

DITTON was so kind to Baretta during the days that he lay helpless on his bed that the young man's feeling of animosity was greatly softened. Baretta still thought that Ditton should have taken his side rather than Luck's, but he now did him the justice to admit that he had done his utmost to save him from the violence of the mob. And how could one quarrel with a man who brought one books and papers, and delicacies to tempt the appetite, and who never met fretfulness and impatience with harsh words?

"You mustn't do so much for me," said Baretta on one occasion.

"Well, I don't have an invalid on my hands every day," replied Ditton.

"But you have no reason for it in my case, Mr. Ditton. Indeed, I thought you considered me an enemy."

"You seem to have been thinking a good many foolish things, my boy."

"Don't you see why I should suppose that?" asked Baretta.

"It wouldn't have been the part of a friend to back you up in that foolish attack on Luck, or to approve of all that nonsense about interesting your swells in our cause."

"Why do you call them my swells? They don't care anything for me," said the young man, bitterly.

"That's what I've been telling you all along. I'm glad you see it at last."

But perhaps Baretta did not quite see it, after all. He had plenty of time to make plans for his future mission as a prophet

in society, warning it of its destruction, and these plans seemed golden to him. One thing which confirmed him in his resolution was the impossibility of going back to his old work. Even if he could make up his mind to do it, his usefulness would be destroyed ; and he felt that he could not make up his mind. He had no longer any quarrel with Ditton. How could he have now ? But even Ditton had become jealous of his ability to get on by himself ; of that he was very sure. And one day Maud brought him a letter, addressed to him at Arragon Street, which confirmed him in his resolution to follow his own course.

Maud came to see him every day, usually in the afternoon, because her mornings and evenings were occupied at the small shop where she sold newspapers and lead-pencils and candy, and kept the accounts—that shop of which she had often complained so bitterly. She had gone back to her home, after all, in spite of her passionate declaration that she had left it forever. If Baretta had only asked her to stay, she would have stayed in spite of everything ; but he did not love her as she loved him. To her ill-regulated mind, educated beyond her environment but not beyond its influences, and fed upon the silly fiction which reflected anything but life as poor humanity finds it, love was an emotion that did not consort with reason. It was a fine romantic fervour to which nothing was impossible. She pictured to herself how differently events would have come about if the Duchess had gone to the Captain to tell him that she had abandoned everything for his sake. Maud could have played the part of the Duchess if her lover had been willing to play that of the Captain. When she found that he was not, it was comparatively easy for Ditton to persuade her to go back to Arragon Street. Her mother was sitting up for her, and let her in with trembling hands, beseeching her to go up-stairs softly, lest her father should know where she had been. But she would not promise not to see Baretta again. She packed his things the next day, looking among his books for the volume which had the name of Mildred Lawrence written on the fly-leaf ; this, however, she did not find, and she wondered whether he had returned it to the owner, or carried it with him as something too precious to part with. “She ain’t nursing him now he’s sick,”

said Maud to herself, half angry, half exultant. "I guess she don't care for him enough for that." After the young man's belongings had been carried away—Peter Dolan had made two or three ineffectual threats of pitching them into the street—she cried over a half-worn necktie which she had found upon his bureau, and had taken away to lock up among her scanty hoard of treasures. She had nothing else to remind her of him, not even a lock of his hair. The only present he had given her was a ring with a tiny pearl, and this somehow did not seem to be a tangible memorial of his presence. But over that dingy bit of silk she shed many tears; which was because she had an ill-regulated mind.

The letter which Maud brought to Baretta was from Binney, the editor of the *Mail*. In it that arbiter of so many destinies expressed satisfaction with the young man's previous contributions, and asked if he could not send something in a slightly different vein. Sketches of some of the leaders in the Socialistic movement would interest the public. These must be bright and crisp, giving the salient characteristics of the men and the picturesque points in their careers. Mr. Binney further suggested that something autobiographical would make good "copy," and offered to spare his correspondent's modesty by putting this in the form of an "interview," if the material were furnished to one of the *Mail's* young men.

"See that," Baretta said, handing the letter to Maud when he had read it. "Doesn't that look as if I would get on?"

"How badly he writes, Frank," was the girl's comment. "You tell me what it's about. Do you think it's such a big thing just to be on a paper?" she added, when the nature of Binney's offer had been explained to her.

"It's a beginning—can't you see how much it means to me?" asked Baretta, fretfully. "Well, no; I suppose you can't."

"Yes, I'm stupid, Frank—I ain't like her. Why don't you go and marry her, if you're getting to be such a great man?"

"I wish you wouldn't talk like a fool." He limped across the room—he was no longer obliged to stay in bed, although he was still very lame—and sat down at a table by the window.

"It's enough of a chance for me to jump at, anyway," he said, as he began to write his reply.

Maud's eyes filled with tears, but she accepted the rebuke in silence. Of late she had become almost humbly anxious to please him.

"I didn't mean to be rude to you," said Baretta, looking up presently. "Only I want you to have faith in me—to believe that I am going to make my way in the world." He sealed the letter and wrote the address. "And take you with me, Maud ; don't forget that."

"I ain't so likely to forget it as you are," said the girl. There was no bitterness in her tone ; it was rather as if she had resigned herself to the inevitable.

Perhaps some latent consciousness that she had spoken the truth made Baretta eager to protest. But if he convinced himself he did not convince her. The mournful presentiment that this episode in her career must come to an end sooner or later continued to oppress her. Unfortunately it increased rather than lessened the strength of her devotion. Some women resent the treachery of their lovers ; others it only makes more fond. Maud felt that to stop caring for Baretta was something which she could not do under any circumstances. She even resented his getting well because it separated him from her, and put an end to those afternoons which she had found so sadly sweet. Baretta, as soon as he was able, had found a new room for himself, in a better neighbourhood than Arragon Street. Since to go back there was impossible, he conceived a singular distaste for living longer in the slums. He took a small furnished chamber in a house in one of the South End squares. It would cost him three dollars a week, which was a good deal for one whose income was nothing, and who depended upon chance crumbs from the *Mail's* table. But his confidence that he would get on stimulated him to take the risk of being able to pay it. Maud went with him to see the place once, and it struck her as being actually luxurious. There were lace curtains at the window, and a black-walnut set, and the wash-stand boasted of a marble top. It was so much better than Arragon Street that how could he care any longer for a girl who lived

there? When she thought of him as in Manchester Square he seemed to be farther away from her than ever.

Ditton went with Baretta on the day that he moved his modest possessions into his new quarters—these were little more than a valise full of clothing, and a few books, and the table at which he did his writing—but he made no remark concerning the changed nature of the surroundings. Indeed, it is quite likely that he never noticed it. Any four walls that provided a shelter were all the same to the preacher, who, as we have seen, often found himself with no shelter at all. But Ditton irritated Baretta in another way, and that was by refusing to take a penny from him in payment of the expense to which a visitor had put him.

"It's absurd, Mr. Ditton—I can't allow it," said Baretta. "Why, I've been with you for over a week, and I haven't even paid for my meals or anything."

"Pooh, pooh! I paid my bill this morning and gave up the room, and what difference does it make?"

"But look here—I have twenty dollars—don't you remember finding it that night?—and it's absurd for you to act in this way. I've no doubt you haven't left yourself a cent."

"Oh yes, I have," said Ditton, thrusting his hand into his pocket and producing two or three silver coins and some pennies. "Look here, there's seventy-five—eighty-five—why, I have ninety-six cents. What can a man want more?"

"I tell you I won't have it!" cried Baretta, impatiently. "I insist on paying."

"I don't know how you can insist, my boy, if I won't take it."

"But you have no right to put me under such an obligation to you."

"What good is money to me?" argued Ditton. "I've got enough for my dinner, and if I can't do anything else I'll come back here and sleep with you. Keep your twenty dollars, Baretta. This newspaper work of yours won't last, and you'll be glad to have it to fall back upon."

"I'll go halves with you—I insist upon that."

"No, no—when some poor devil needs a little and I haven't

any for him, I'll call on you, and if you can spare a dollar or two then, well and good. I won't take it now; I might lose it."

"Yes, or give it away to the first beggar you come across. But I tell you it's yours, and I won't take it back. There it is on the table, and if you don't take it with you I'll lock it up and keep it until you come again."

After Ditton had gone this incident struck Baretta as so characteristic of the man that he incorporated it with that sketch of him which he was writing for the *Mail*. He was not at all sure that his former master—he had already detached himself in his own consciousness from his discipleship—would be pleased with the notoriety thus thrust upon him. But, then, why should he object? It was to be a friendly sketch, written altogether in sympathy with the cause. Baretta would not admit that because he had taken up his own line the great principles in which Ditton had educated him were any less dear to him. Indeed, was it not because he could better advance them in this way that he had taken it up at all? If this were a deceptive argument it at least deceived himself. He worked diligently at his article, and when on the evening of the second day he took it in person to Mr. Binney he was immensely pleased with it, and thought it was by all odds the cleverest thing he had done. He had to wait in an outer office a long time—so it seemed to him—before he was admitted to the presence of the editor.

"Oh, how are you, Mr. Baretta?" said Binney, looking up from his littered desk, and hastily shoving aside a bulky manuscript and several galleys of proofs. "I don't often see any one in the evening, but I made an exception in your case." He pulled out his watch in a nervous way, and then touched an electric-bell and lifted to his ear a tube that hung by the desk. "It's after nine o'clock—I didn't know it was so late. Mr. Smith," he called through the tube, "hurry that B matter, and let me have the revises as soon as you can! Now, Mr. Baretta, I can give you five minutes."

"I am sorry to intrude," began the young man, flushing; "I didn't realize you would be so busy."

"Oh, that's all right; I'm always busy. We liked your last articles very much. They have attracted a good deal of atten-

tion. What do you think of my idea of writing up the leaders in the movement? I suppose you're not all so equal that you don't have leaders?"

"I've begun with a sketch of Mr. Ditton. I know him very well."

"Ditton—Ditton; the name strikes me as familiar."

"Perhaps you've heard of his preaching on the Common, sir."

"Ah, yes, yes—Ditton, the Socialist preacher—that's the man. Well, that ought to be interesting. Just leave the copy and I'll look it over to-morrow."

"And—and when," asked Baretta, rising to go, "may I send you another?"

"Oh, when you like. I can't promise to publish them as fast as you send them; we're always crowded with more stuff than we can use. But I should think that perhaps once a fortnight, or every three weeks—"

Once a fortnight! Why, even if all his articles were taken, and he got ten dollars apiece for them, that would only be five dollars a week. Baretta made this simple computation almost instantaneously. Five dollars a week! How could he live on five dollars a week?

"I—I am greatly obliged to you, sir," he stammered. Mr. Binney was not a formidable person, but somehow his position as an editor made him seem so to Baretta, and he quite lost his usual air of confidence in his presence. "There is no other opening—there is nothing else I could do?"

"Why, no, I think not," replied the editor, leaning back in his chair and smiling faintly. "There is no vacancy on our staff at present, and if there were one there would be a dozen applicants for it. Perhaps you might find a chance on the *Trumpet*—I'll give you a note to Carson, if you like—or on the *Banner*. But we shall always be glad to hear from you. The same address? No? Well, send it with the next batch of copy. Good-evening, Mr. Baretta. Oh, by the way," Mr. Binney called out, as the young man was fumbling at the door in a disconcerted way, "here's something that may interest you. It's a despatch from Vienna—came down in the proofs a few moments ago—and, of course, I thought of you at once."

Baretta took the printed slip and drew a few steps nearer to the light to read it. There were only half a dozen lines in the item, but the young man's hands trembled so that at first he could hardly gather their meaning. "M. Paul Baretta-Smolzow, Baron Smolzow, is dead," it ran. "He was sixty-eight and unmarried, and it is believed that the nearest heir to the estates is a cousin who went to America a great many years ago, and has never been heard of since. Baron Smolzow had lived in retirement for some time, although formerly he was well known in the diplomatic world."

For a moment the room seemed to spin before the young man's eyes. He sat down again, feeling sick and faint. Paul Baretta-Smolzow! His father's name was Paul Baretta—his father, a drunken barber, a worthless scapegrace who had married a factory-girl! It was absurd to imagine that there could be any connection between the two men. What could be more common than a coincidence of this sort—a man of ignoble birth bearing a noble name? And yet Mr. Binney had thought that it might interest him—the son of a barber. He could not tell the editor how absurd such a supposition was. Would the Lawrences, and Mrs. Chilton, and the rest think it absurd? Then he thought how much their belief in it might mean to him.

"Of course," Mr. Binney was saying, "you could hardly be the cousin who came to this country many years ago. You were born here, were you not? But the name Baretta; it isn't a common one—at least, in these parts."

"My—my father came from Hungary in 1848, when he—was a very young man," said Baretta, wiping the cold sweat from his forehead.

"Why, of course—then you must be Baron Smolzow." Binney spoke jocosely, and Baretta, although he could not make up his mind to yield to the temptation which had assailed him, resented the implication that such a thing was at all incredible.

"Well, Mr. Binney, as to that I can't say." He resolved to tell nothing more than the truth and leave the other to draw his own inferences. Surely there could be nothing wrong in that! "My father's name was Paul Baretta, and he came here in 1848, during the troubles in Hungary—the Kossuth rebellion, you

know. At least," he added, with a scrupulous regard for the comfort of his conscience, "so he used to tell me."

"Why, why, this is worth looking into! Your father must have left some papers—something to prove his identity. Did he never give you a hint of anything of this sort?"

Baretta hesitated. He saw that he stood now at the parting of the ways, and that if he denied any suspicion of former ancestral glories it would be difficult to pass hereafter for anything more than plain Francis Baretta. And she—who had not even shaken hands with him when she bade him good-bye—she would still think of him as one infinitely beneath her, one to whom kindness would be condescension. He made up his mind which way to take.

"Well, sir, I won't say that he didn't," he said, with a rather tremulous effort to appear at ease.

"This is interesting—it is, indeed. And you think he may have had some proofs of his birth?"

"Proofs? What would be proofs?" Baretta looked at Mr. Binney curiously, as if anticipating suspicion.

"Well, you know," laughed the editor, "you can't get those estates by merely saying you are Francis Baretta—can you now?"

"Oh, the estates! I had forgotten the estates."

"They're a good deal more important than the title, to my mind. What is it—Baron Smolzow? You Hungarians pronounce your 'ows' in that way—'off,' don't you?"

"I—I believe so, sir. But you may be mistaken—it may be only a coincidence. A very queer one, to be sure," Baretta added, fearing lest he might be laying too much stress upon this point.

"I should look it up if I were you," said Mr. Binney, reaching for the proofs which had just been shot out of a pneumatic tube close at hand. "Come in to-morrow or next day, and talk to one of our men about it. Oh, we must have that interview with you now. Good-night, Mr. Baretta; I won't call you Baron until I am sure of it, you know." And he laughed with the air of one who is used to having his wit appreciated.

Baretta pressed both hands excitedly to his forehead as he

stepped out into the cool night air; his brain still whirled with the tumult of emotion which that insignificant despatch from Vienna had aroused. Surely it was a strange coincidence, whatever way one looked at it. Baron Smolzow! Had he, indeed, any right to claim that title? He saw as in a dream all that might come if he should claim it, right or no right. No longer a poor, unknown, struggling foreigner, with only his brains to help him, but, instead, a man with an ancestral name of which he might well be proud; more than the equal of those who had hitherto regarded him with hardly concealed condescension. Francis Baretta, the surviving heir of the noble house of Smolzow! He had never heard of Baron Smolzow in his life, but he went on inventing all sort of dignities and honours for him. Francis Baretta—Baron Smolzow! What proof would there be that he was not the man? "A cousin who went to America many years ago, and has never been heard of since—" the words of the despatch seemed to be printed on his brain in fiery letters. Suppose it were impossible to find him. Who could then say that he was not the son of this cousin? Of course some effort would be made to acquaint the heir of those estates with the good-fortune that had befallen him. The estates! The late baron had no doubt been a wealthy man, and now all his money was going begging for some one to inherit it. If the cousin were not found, who would step in to claim them? There must be somebody, of course.

Proofs! proofs! Binney had said there must be proofs. The words recurred to him with mechanical iteration as he walked up Tremont Street towards Manchester Square. What proofs could be wanted? how could he give any? He tried in vain to recall distinctly anything that his father had ever said of his career in the land of his birth; but he was too much agitated now to put such hints together and make a connected story, even if he had ever received them. Besides, that was a long time ago, and how could a mere boy, as he was then, be expected to remember? Half unconsciously he began to invent for himself a tale to bridge the gap. The elder Baretta had come to America in 1848; there, at least, was a starting-point. But when did the cousin who had never been heard of since come? It was

essential to know that. Proofs! proofs! How ridiculously brief that despatch had been. It didn't even tell where Baron Paul had died, or where his estates were. If he were to have recollections of early splendours described by his father he must surely know something more than the papers had told him. Could he gain this knowledge before it was too late, or must he come forward now and say, "I am Francis Baretta, son of Paul Baretta, who came to America years ago, and mine are the estates and title." Let the others—so he vaguely thought of possible claimants at home—show that his assertion was false if they could. Baron Smolzow! Perhaps those who knew him would accept the assertion for proof. But no; how could he tell a lie like that and look into her pure eyes? If she despised him now, would she not despise him the more when she discovered the truth? And yet was there any other way of making himself her equal—one whom she would talk with freely and no longer regard with a kind of gentle scorn? It was unjust to Mildred, indeed, to say that she had ever scorned him, but perhaps the young man was in no mood to be just. Baron Smolzow! How those who despised him now would fawn upon him then. Would he not be a fool to let the opportunity go by? Probably the cousin who had come to America was dead by this time, or, if he were alive, he might never know. Why shouldn't he himself enjoy these honours, and perhaps this wealth, if they remained unclaimed? Baron Smolzow! Proofs! proofs! The words were still keeping up a kind of rhythmical chant in his brain as he let himself into the house in Manchester Square and stole softly up-stairs to his narrow room. It had seemed to him luxurious after Arragon Street, but now it struck him as a shabby retreat for the heir to a title and estates. Baron Smolzow! who had less than ten dollars in his pocket and was writing about Socialism for a newspaper! The conjunction was so incongruous that he gave a discordant laugh, which somehow startled himself as he heard it. Why should he laugh like that? There was nothing to laugh at. His head must have been turned a little by this unexpected news.

CHAPTER XVII

"IT WILL BE A GREAT CHANGE"

It was rather by the force of circumstances than by his own will, after all, that Baretta became confirmed in the possession of his newly-acquired title. That paragraph in the *Mail* which accompanied his sketch of Ditton—the paragraph which Yates had seen—brought a score of reporters and correspondents down upon him; so that M. Paul Baretta-Smolzow, Baron Smolzow, had more fame on one side of the ocean in his death than he had ever enjoyed while he lived. Baretta gave the *Mail* "the first hack," as the young man from that journal who came to see him expressed it, and after that talked freely to all who would listen. It was quite true that he didn't have any very definite information to impart. But there was that strange coincidence to be got over by any one who disputed his claim to be considered the late Baron Smolzow's heir. The *Banner*, which vaunted itself upon being more enterprising than any of its competitors, had ordered its correspondent at Berlin to proceed to Vienna and hunt up the history of the Smolzow family, and particularly of the erratic cousin who came to America so many years ago. The correspondent obeyed post-haste, and went not only to Vienna but to Budapest, where he gained much valuable information. The estates, he found, were at Bataszek. They were not large, but the family residence was in the highest degree picturesque, and all that any baron could ask. Besides, the late baron, after a youth spent in extravagance, had become extremely economical, and it was supposed that he had left a tidy sum of money invested in good securities. As for the lost cousin, he had fled from his native land as a consequence of complicity in

the Kossuth rebellion. His name, too, was Paul. What more cogent proof could Francis Baretta, the son of Paul Baretta, an exile of 1848, ask to have? It was all wonderfully direct and plain. Unfortunately, a court of law would want documents, and these did not seem to be forthcoming.

But meanwhile why should any one doubt that Francis Baretta was really Baron Smolzew? The humble position in life which his father had occupied was known only to himself, nor did he confide in any one the suspicion that the name of Paul Baretta might not have been rightfully his. He excused this reticence by saying that he had put forth no pretensions to the title. He admitted the strangeness of the coincidence, and left it to others to draw what inferences they pleased. Perhaps such an attitude was more convincing than any amount of protestation; and it had the further advantage of enabling him to disclaim any intentional deceit if the Paul Baretta who was cousin to the late baron, or any heir of his, should turn up. In that case he could simply say that his father had been Paul Baretta, and if he were not related to the house of Smolzew then the coincidence must be regarded as stranger still. It took him some time to argue out the matter in this way; but after many hours of anxious thought such was the conclusion that he reached. He had no chance for the present to try to obtain the estate, although he intended to make his existence known to the other heirs in Hungary, and let them undertake the task of showing that he had no claim. Meanwhile this shadowy succession to the title would be worth something to him. Baretta took occasion to state his position very clearly in another "interview," which appeared in the *Banner* after the energetic correspondent at Berlin had sent the results of his researches into the family history of the Smolzews, and had described with much vividness of detail the ancestral seat at Bataszek. If sometimes his conscience reproached him, despite all his sophistries, he did his best to quiet it by saying that the deception harmed no one, and that a man situated as he was must use whatever means he could to get on. And the immediate consequence was that he got on very well. The people who could help him in his social aspirations were still out of town, but meanwhile his earning capacity as a jour-

nalist was immensely increased. He continued to provide his sketches for the *Mail*, and began a series of articles on the needs of the poorer classes for the *Banner*. His education had been imperfect, but he had a certain degree of facility with the pen, and where he was ignorant he was clever enough to conceal it. Besides, newspaper readers are not always critical. He found this out when he sent an article on Socialism to one of the magazines and had it promptly returned to him as unavailable. Perhaps the editor did not know that Francis Baretta was Baron Smolzow, or he would have decided differently.

But there were more vexatious matters than this to consider—chief among them his relations with Maud, which had always been incongruous and were now clearly impossible. How could the heir to an ancient title marry the daughter of an ignorant Irish mechanic? He forgot, when he asked himself this question, that his own father had been a barber and his mother a factory-girl. He remembered it afterwards, and had the grace to be ashamed for the moment of the disingenuousness of the argument; but he soon came to see that in following the course he had marked out for himself scruples of this sort would be out of place. Francis Baretta might have married Maud Dolan, though even then it would have been a sad *mésalliance*; Baron Smolzow could not do it under any circumstances. In consequence of this decision he said nothing at all to Maud concerning his altered fortunes. Since he had taken the room in Manchester Square he had been in the habit of meeting her every evening as she came away from the shop, and walking with her as far as the corner of Arragon Street. For a week after his eventful call upon Mr. Binney he continued the custom. Then for a whole week she did not see him at all. Of course he knew perfectly well that he could not disappear from her horizon in this way. But many a man in the success of temporary expedients forgets the inevitable failure when these are exhausted.

And Maud? At first she thought he had forgotten, and was angry; then that something had kept him, and was sorry. When a fourth evening came and he was still missing, the conviction

that he was staying away on purpose struck a sudden chill to her heart. She went home with a stoic resolve to endure this latest buffet from the hand of Fate without complaining, but the gift of self-control had been denied to her, and so she broke down utterly and sobbed herself to sleep. At last it occurred to her that he must be ill, and she reproached herself bitterly for ever thinking anything else, and for leaving him to suffer alone. The next afternoon she set out for Manchester Square. Very possibly he would scold her for coming; it wasn't the thing to do at all; but she didn't care for that if he needed her. She fancied that the woman who came to the door looked at her suspiciously as she asked her to be seated in the large and lofty parlour, desolate enough in the tawdriness of its furnishings, which opened from the hall.

"Is he sick?" began Maud, breathlessly, pausing on the threshold. "Can't I go straight up?"

"You set there, miss. No, he ain't sick that I know of," the woman added, with a more surly air than ever.

Maud knew what this reply meant and blushed angrily. "I guess it's all right," she said, with a toss of her head. "I'm his girl—we're going to be married."

"Going to ain't is. If Mr. Baretta's in he'll come down and see you."

This epigrammatic if ungrammatical reminder of the uncertainty of natural events and the vanity of human wishes increased the nervous tension under which the girl was labouring. She sat in this doleful parlour for what seemed to her a long time. Frank must be at home or the woman would have come back to tell her he wasn't. Why, then, did he keep her waiting? Did he hope that she would go away without seeing him at all? Well, that was what she would do in about a minute. He was not ill, and yet he had neglected her for a whole week. Hadn't she good cause to be angry? She rose to her feet impatiently as she caught a glimpse of him coming down the stairs and hurried to the door to meet him.

Baretta started back when he saw who his visitor was. "Oh—why, Maud—is it—is it you?" he stammered.

"Me! who else should it be?" cried the girl.

"Well, I was only told a young person wanted to see me, and of course I—I—"

"Of course you'd forgotten any young person you hadn't seen for a week." Maud laughed bitterly, but there was a choking sensation in her throat, and she turned away to hide from him the tear which slowly trickled down her cheek.

"Don't be silly," said Baretta. He knew that he was treating her badly, and the knowledge made him irritable.

"I won't be silly any more, Frank," replied Maud, as calmly as she could. "I won't be silly enough to think any longer that you care for me."

"You shouldn't say that," he began, paltering even yet with the decision which he believed he had reached. "You know that I care for you—I always shall, whatever happens. I—I was going to meet you to-night to tell you—unless, indeed, you saw it in the papers—"

"Bother the papers—I don't read them. What should I see in the papers? But perhaps it's something you've been writing, Frank."

"It will be a great change for me—for us both." She looked at him questioningly as he said this, and his eyes dropped before her gaze. "Won't you come in?" he added, advancing into the parlour and drawing forward a chair.

She followed him mechanically and sat down, but her lips were trembling and her face was very pale as she waited to hear what he had to say. What she was thinking was that he had not once kissed her—and after a whole week, too.

"I—I thought you might have seen it in the papers," said Baretta at last. "My father's cousin—at least I suppose he's that—has died, and I—"

"Yes, and you?" interrupted Maud, impatiently.

"I—I am Baron Smolzow." He threw himself into an attitude which he fancied a chance spectator would have found very impressive. "Baron Smolzow," he repeated, waving his hand airily.

The girl simply gazed at him with uncomprehending eyes. The announcement seemed to convey to her no meaning at all.

"Baron Smolzow," said Baretta again, after a moment of si-

lence. "Don't you understand? The news came from Vienna in the papers. My father was Paul Baretta—the cousin who came to America in 1848 and whom they are looking for now." As Maud still gave no sign of understanding him, he added: "Why, I've often told you about my family—don't be so stupid."

"I—I guess I am rather stupid, Frank," said Maud, slowly. She started to rise, but the room seemed to be turning around, and she sank back into the chair again.

But Baretta noticed nothing. He was too much intent upon trying to impress her with an adequate sense of the ancestral glories which had descended upon him. "Of course I should have told you all about it, Maud," he added, graciously. "We neither of us thought, did we, that things would turn out so? You often said that I ought to—that my family was different from yours—I don't want to hurt your feelings, Maud, but you know what I mean."

He paused, but she made no answer, which increased his irritation. It was not a pleasant position he was in, at best, and she might do something to help him out. But he had often felt that she was selfish.

"Well, it's quite a long story," said Baretta, "and as you don't seem to be much interested in it—"

"I am listening, Frank. What is there for me to say?"

"Oh, if you take it that way! I thought you would be glad to hear of my good-fortune. You've told me so many times that I ought to cut loose from every one—I mean from Ditton and those fellows, of course—and associate with people of my own class—"

Maud was not a lady, to be sure, but perhaps she behaved as nearly like one then as at any time in all her life. The blow was so crushing, she felt its consequences to be so irrevocable, that she was fairly numbed by it into a kind of dull acquiescence in her fate. And she wanted to get away before he had shamed himself any further before her. It was this noble impulse of magnanimity which lifted her for the moment above her natural level, and showed how much she might have achieved for herself under happier conditions.

"I suppose you will shake hands with me and—and say good-bye," said Maud, rising once more, resolved to permit no foolish feminine weakness to overcome her.

"Good-bye? Why should you say good-bye?" asked Baretta, taking the out-stretched fingers in his. He was immensely relieved to find that she did not intend to make a "scene," but he was still anxious to delude himself with the belief that if they separated it would be her doing. "No, no, Maud—I shall come to see you in a day or two. It isn't good-bye yet."

"Don't!" she cried, sharply, releasing herself as he bent forward to kiss her. She walked quickly to the door, but turned at the threshold. "I—I guess you'll be happy, Frank. I shall like to think of you as a great man, that wasn't too proud to go about with the likes of me!"

"But, Maud! Maud!—you don't know what you're saying—"

The closing of the front door cut short this remonstrance. He stood gazing blankly at the spot where she had been standing only the moment before; and a pang—half sorrow, half reproach—invaded his heart when he remembered all that this parting meant. And yet what had he said, what had he done, that was unkind? He was relieved to think there had been no "scene." But he felt somehow as if things would go all the harder with Maud on this account. He tried to excuse himself by saying that he had not wanted to make so abrupt an ending of their relations. He hoped that she would see the folly of looking forward to marrying him, but meanwhile he would have continued—for the time, at least—the semblance of devotion to her. It was like a woman to take a man too literally. Perhaps the knowledge that he had lost her stirred in him a little revival of kindly emotion that was almost love; so that he made up his mind at last not to give her up quite so easily. He was sure that he had only to go to her to win her back.

It was before he had an opportunity to do this, however, that Ditton came to see him. Baretta was actually a little lonely at this period of his career, having cut loose from old associations before he had found new ones, and he was glad to receive a visit from his old leader. He flung the door of his chamber

open wide in response to Ditton's knock. "Well, this is pleasant," he said.

"Is it?" asked Ditton, dryly. He stepped inside, ignoring Baretta's out-stretched hand. "What did you mean by writing that stuff in the *Mail* about me?" he said.

"Why—why, didn't you like it?" stammered Baretta.

"Like it! How can you ask the question? See here, Baretta, I've got just about two words to say to you, and I'll say 'em quick, and then I'll go." Ditton paused for a moment; but as the other stared at him in silence, went on in measured tones, as if the matter were one in which he had no interest whatever: "I've read all that stuff about you and your rubbishy title, and I'm prepared to lose you as a helper in the cause. I've felt for some time that you wouldn't hold out. Well, perhaps that's all right. After the row you were fool enough to have with Luck I don't know what you could do, anyway. But I didn't think the time would ever come when I should refuse to take your hand because I had found you out to be a mean skunk. That's plain English, ain't it? And that's all I have to say to you."

Baretta, amazed at the outset by the suddenness of the attack, now turned upon his accuser a face livid with rage and hate. "Oh, I knew it would come—I knew you'd show yourself in your true colours. So you hate me, do you?" he screamed, shaking his fist and stamping his foot. "You call me a skunk—me? after all I've done for you. Why, I—I wrote about you, you fool, because I wanted to help you—"

"Yes, and that was the lowest trick of all," interrupted Ditton.

"Trick! It's you that played the trick—pretending to be my friend, and then setting a lot of drunken devils on me to kill me. Do you think I don't know it? Why, I heard you and Luck planning it all— Damn you, there you are shaking your head now and muttering that you'll down me yet! You—you! How dare you call me names? Who's the traitor now? Not me—not Baron Smolzow!" He dropped panting into a chair, his eyes rolling terribly and his mouth distorted in a kind of frenzy.

"Good heavens, man! are you mad or drunk?" cried Ditton, looking at him with a strange sense of horror.

Baretta rose to his feet again, and, rushing across the room, unlocked a drawer in his desk and drew out a bank-note. "There it is!" he cried; "there's the money you wouldn't take from me—the dirty ten dollars. Well, you'll take it now. I can get plenty more in spite of you all. Take it!" He thrust the note into Ditton's hand, but Ditton let it drop to the floor. "Oh, you won't take it?" cried Baretta, stooping to seize it. "Well, I want you to see that I don't use it." He fluttered the note wildly in the air a moment. "Ten dollars! Now is your last chance. There—there—there—there!" At each word he tore the note, only stopping when it had been reduced to pieces so minute that no one could ever put it together again. "Are you satisfied now?" he asked, flinging up both arms and laughing loudly.

To this frantic tirade Ditton made no reply. If he had come to see this young man with feelings of anger, it was with a sorrowful heart that he left him. What did it all mean? Was Baretta out of his head? Ditton stood with his hand on the knob, looking at him in a puzzled way for a moment. Then he said, "Well, I'm sorry to have a bad opinion of you, Baretta, but I can't help it," and so went away.

Baretta walked up and down the room in a bewildered sort of fashion for some time after this. He could not recall exactly what had taken place at first; there was only a confused sense of wrath in his mind. Then Ditton's opprobrious epithet came back to him, and he shook his fist and stamped his foot once more, although there was no one by to see. He was being very unfairly treated. Maud first, and then Ditton, had tried to put him in the wrong. But, after all, he had done nothing to be ashamed of. They were the ones who ought to reproach themselves for their injustice to him. Well, let them all conspire against him; he would get the better of them yet. This was the idea which kept recurring to him—the idea that there was some conspiracy of which he was the object. Perhaps it was unfair to connect Maud with it, but of Ditton's hostility he no longer had any doubt. But he would rise—he would rise in

spite of all. Baron Smolzow would make a greater name for himself than even Francis Baretta could have done. He had almost forgotten that there was any doubt about the reality of his title. His past seemed somehow to be separated from him by a gulf which it would be impossible to recross. Was it not best, indeed, to forget it altogether? Then he thought of Maud again. Poor Maud! he had been very fond of her, after all. The recollection of his fondness seemed to dissipate the wild wrath he had been cherishing. As he walked up and down he grew calmer, and the livid look of rage in his face died out. Poor Maud! He must see her once more and try to explain things to her a little more clearly. Then he seemed to hear that strange discordant laugh of his again—on the night that he had first learned of the death of M. Paul Baretta-Smolzow, Baron Smolzow.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LION OF THE HOUR

YATES was a little late in reaching Mrs. Cadwallader's, and he found her pretty rooms crowded. No one noticed him when he came in, for which he was thankful. Ever since he had promised to be present he had regretted it, and if he could have thought of any good excuse for staying away he would have availed himself of it. He knew that Mildred Lawrence would be there, and he did not wish to meet her again. Perhaps he was now a little vexed with her, as well as grieved by her persistent refusal to forgive him. He remembered how coldly she had regarded him when Daisy Tredwell tried to bring them together once more, and he began to think that her resentment was unwomanly. Even Daisy herself, Mildred's own intimate friend, had sympathized with him. Thus the danger of intermeddling in the quarrels of lovers was again demonstrated.

But Philip could not refuse Mrs. Cadwallader's invitation simply because he was not on good terms with one of her guests. Mrs. Cadwallader was one of his oldest friends, and his liking for her was very hearty and genuine. Besides, her house was always a pleasant one to visit. Literally speaking, it was not a house, but a flat. The rooms were small and somewhat inconveniently arranged; but the taste displayed in their adornment was perfect. Modern notions of decoration prevailed, although they were not allowed to run riot. There were draperies and folding screens, little tables and tête-à-tête sofas, and numberless cosy corners; and yet one could move about perfectly well without tripping over rugs or kicking one's shins against the furniture. There was the usual variety of colour, but everything

was so placed that one was never conscious of contrasts reminding one of a crazy-cushion ; and the prevailing tint, that to which all the others seemed to be subdued, was a soft yellow. Thus on the gloomiest days one could almost fancy that the sun was shining somewhere.

There were so many of Mrs. Cadwallader's acquaintances in the rooms on this bright October afternoon that the surroundings formed only a vague background to a mass of well-dressed men and women. A young lady was at the pianoforte when Philip entered, singing one of Tosti's vapid ballads. He stood at the back of the room until she had finished. Then he edged towards a corner where there was a vacant chair.

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Yates?" said a voice in his ear. He turned to find that the lady of whose back he had caught a glimpse when he sat down was Miss Linley. "I haven't seen you since you were at the Shoals with George," she added, amiably. "Did you enjoy your trip?"

"Immensely—I dare say your brother told you all about it."

"One's brother never tells one anything." Then she leaned slightly forward and asked in a mysterious whisper, "Is he a friend of yours, Mr. Yates?"

"Your brother? I—I don't quite understand."

"How stupid you are! I mean the Baron, of course."

"The Baron! Oh yes—I am rather stupid."

"You think that he *is* a baron—this Mr. Baretta? And he didn't know who Plato was—fancy that! I met him at Mrs. Chilton's," explained Miss Linley.

"Well, as to that—you know what the newspapers say."

"But Mrs. Cadwallader says that she holds you responsible for him."

"Holds me responsible! Oh, she can't do that, Miss Linley. She asked me to bring him to see her, and I was very glad to do so ; but now he must shift for himself."

"Then you don't like him—you don't believe in him?"

"Pardon me—that was not what I meant at all," said Philip. He was irritated at this questioning about Baretta, whom he continued somehow to distrust, in spite of all resolutions not to do so. "I know nothing against him. I dare say that he's a very

good sort of fellow. He is clever, at all events. Haven't all these people come to hear him?"

"Oh, well, I only came out of curiosity," said Miss Linley, rather stiffly. "I prefer something that's more intellectual. But it was I who suggested this to him."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; didn't you know? I told him at Mrs. Chilton's that mamma liked to have things. Of course, when I saw how ignorant he was, I had to give him a hint. But people of that sort push themselves forward so on the slightest encouragement."

"Ah, but he will have encouragement enough now!" exclaimed Philip, rather bitterly. "He will be quite the lion of the season."

"Do you think so?" asked Miss Linley. She hesitated a moment and then added, "Perhaps we shall have to ask him to Cambridge, after all."

Philip was more certain than ever that Baretta would be lionized to his heart's content when he observed how Mrs. Cadwallader's guests crowded around him after the lecture was over. It annoyed him strangely to see that Mildred Lawrence and her father were among those who shook hands with him and congratulated him. Why the deuce should people make such a fuss over a commonplace diatribe against society? There was something ludicrous, even disgusting, in it. Baretta had certainly proclaimed no new truth; he had not even put old ones in a new way. His lecture had simply been a rather ingenious *réchauffé* of the familiar Socialistic arguments. It was creditable, of course, considering how few opportunities the young man had enjoyed; but it was not remarkable. However, a baron was not to be judged too critically. Perhaps Francis Baretta would have been a lion, but as Baron Smolzow his roaring was irresistible. It was not every protégé of Mrs. Chilton's who found himself admitted to the more august doors of Mrs. Cadwallader. A satiric smile crept into the corners of Philip's mouth when he saw that Charlie Radford and Lord Shetland were also shaking hands with Baretta. These two young Englishmen were visitors to the city whom everybody was dying to know. Perhaps neither would have attracted much attention

just for himself. But Lord Shetland was the son and heir of the Marquis of Thurso, and Charlie Radford was his intimate friend. Philip wondered how Baron Smolzow would get on with them, and he was not surprised, a little later, to hear Charlie characterize him as "a queer sort."

"Queerness goes a long way in Boston," said Philip.

"Well, then, he ought to reach all around the city," said Charlie. "What the deuce do they call him Baron for?"

"Have you never heard of Baron Smolzow — of the great Hungarian family of Baretta? My dear fellow, where have you been?"

"Ah, one of those foreigners!" exclaimed Radford, contemptuously.

"Oh, here you are!" said Mr. Orrin Fox Allen, coming up as Charlie turned to talk with a young lady in blue to whom Philip had presented him. "Mrs. Cadwallader has been asking after you."

"I am only waiting for my chance," said Philip. "One likes to have one's hostess to one's self, if only for a minute."

"I fancy you'll have to wait quite a while, then. Did you ever see such a crush?"

"Is it Baron Smolzow or Lord Shetland that is the drawing card?" asked Philip.

"Oh, don't you like the fellow? Neither do I—Baretta, I mean," added Mr. Allen. "I rather took to him at first, but this baron business — pooh!" And he waved his hand contemptuously.

"Why should we doubt it?" It was true that Philip himself was by no means certain of the reality of Baretta's pretensions, but he was nevertheless inclined, curiously enough, to admit them to others.

"Oh, it all seems to be plain enough; but you can't always tell. I myself don't think much of barons when they come from the slums. Besides, the fellow is a cad."

"That's a little harsh."

"Don't think I blame a man for being poor, Yates. But I'll tell you why I think he's a cad. Oh, I dare say he's forgotten her now—he acted as if he were ashamed of her then."

"Her!" exclaimed Yates. "Whom do you mean by her?"

"She was rather a pretty girl, too—Miss Dolan. You should have heard how he mumbled the name when I met him on the street-car with her. But she wasn't ashamed of it, not much. Oh, of course, she was a common sort of girl, but then a fellow has no right to act like a cad."

"Dolan—oh yes," murmured Philip. He recollected now the words which Baretta's landlord had let drop about his "gyurl" that evening at the Socialist Club.

"Have you seen her?" asked Mr. Allen. "Well, you know, it was amusing the way he behaved—immensely amusing. It's really too good a story to keep; I must tell Mrs. Chilton about it."

"No, don't do that," said Philip, quickly. Then, as Mr. Allen stared at him, he added, "Of course, you know, it's none of my business, but I rather pity the poor devil, after all."

"Pity him! He wouldn't thank you for that."

"I dare say not. Perhaps I don't pity him. Did you say that Mrs. Cadwallader had asked for me?"

And in truth Baretta would have been very much surprised to be told that any one thought of pitying him. He had begun to think of himself as a person to be greatly envied. There was a great difference between the friendless young man who had lived in Arragon Street, and the heir to a title and estates, whom a great lady like Mrs. Cadwallader had invited to her house. Perhaps he exaggerated Mrs. Cadwallader's social importance somewhat, as he had Mrs. Chilton's; but there was no doubt of its reality and of its value to an outsider. When Lord Shetland came up and shook hands with him he felt that he was indeed being recognized by his own order; he had almost deceived himself, it will be observed, in trying to deceive others; the days of his association with Ditton and with Maud Dolan already seemed to belong to a remote past, with which Baron Smolzew had nothing to do. A glimpse of Yates making his way slowly through the crowd, however, reminded him that there was one link connecting him with that past which he could not break. But he ignored the unwelcome suggestion, and put out his hand with a rather condescending smile. "Ah, Yates," he said. "How did you like it?"

"Like it? Oh, the lecture?" replied Philip. Something in Baretta's manner annoyed him. "It was very well," he added, "though of course you can't expect me to believe what you said."

"I think I shall make converts, however," Baretta said, airily. "His lordship congratulated me."

"Who the deuce are you talking about? Lord Shetland?"

"Oh, is that what you call him?" asked Baretta, scowling. "Well, how can I be expected to know all these things? Of course, it's very kind of you to tell me. I haven't had your advantages."

"See here, Baretta, you'd oblige me infinitely if you would drop that rot. I didn't intend to be rude—if you mean that. And as for advantages—why, what more could a man want than you have now?"

"Oh, now! Well, perhaps I have a chance. But the least I ought to do is to thank you for having brought me here—for having introduced me to Mrs. Cadwallader."

"Don't thank me!" cried Philip, sharply, recalling what Miss Linley had said about Mrs. Cadwallader holding him responsible. "She asked me to bring you."

"I am sorry to have put you to so much trouble," retorted Baretta. He was wondering if Yates was in a bad temper because he envied him his present importance. He could quite understand why this should be the case. Yates had always looked down upon him, and no doubt it was galling to have to treat him as an equal.

"Come, Baretta, don't be absurd," was all Philip said. Then some one came up, and he moved on to find his hostess.

"I am so glad you are here," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "I want to talk to you. Don't hurry away—stay and dine with us."

"Thank you. That is an invitation which you know I cannot resist."

"What did you think of the lecture? It struck me as very absurd," she went on. "The only thing that pleased me was that Mr. Pinkerton didn't like it."

"From which I gather that you don't like Mr. Pinkerton?"

"I detest him! It's awful to talk that way about a man when

he's in your own house. But I excuse myself by reflecting that I didn't ask him."

"I admire his coolness in asking himself."

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Cadwallader, smiling, "perhaps I am unjust to Albert Hazard. You know he gave a Browning reading here once, and ever since then he has taken it for granted that he may come. And, indeed, why shouldn't he? I can't tell him that I don't like him. In fact, I wouldn't dare to do so. I know it's very foolish, but I should hate to have him put me into those 'Social Sketches' of his. He's a dreadfully ill-natured person if you offend him."

"It's a pleasant way he has, isn't it?—to go to people's houses and then satirize them in the society papers."

"Mr. Cadwallader detests him worse than I do. He is actually rude to him."

"I can quite sympathize with Mr. Cadwallader," said Yates. "And so poor Baretta will be the next victim, will he?"

"Oh, as to that, I couldn't say. Mr. Pinkerton simply confided to me that the lecture was 'awful rot.' But I should think that Mr. Baretta—oughtn't I to call him Baron Smolzew?—was very clever."

"Clever? I dare say he's clever enough. It's exceedingly kind of him, anyway, to give us all fair warning before he blows us up with dynamite or murders us in our beds. But you mustn't ask me about him—you must judge for yourself."

"Oh, I can't do that; I shall have to take your word for it. One mustn't inquire too curiously, I suppose, when so famous a person is concerned."

"It is kind of you to have him here—it will be a great help to him."

"Perhaps he may not think so. You see, in a republican country we are dreadfully fond of an aristocracy. Do you think that Mr. Baretta—really, it is so hard to call him anything else—will get those estates, as well as the title?"

"Those estates?" said Philip. "Do you mean his castle in Spain?"

Mrs. Cadwallader laughed, but he afterwards reproached himself with being ungenerous to Baretta. It was no affair of his

whether the young man's sudden elevation was based on a delusion or not. His question had been more a protest against being held responsible than anything else. He had been amused by Baretta's flamboyant Socialism in the early days of their acquaintance, even although at the same time he was impressed by the sincerity of it. But Baretta as Baron Smolzow seemed to be part of a masquerade, and not sincere at all. Philip's indignation may have been heightened by the reflection that the part was being played on the same stage with Mildred Lawrence. He saw that she was talking with Baretta now, and he stepped into the adjoining room in order to avoid recognition. He was sure that she did not know he was there, and he wished to spare her even the annoyance of finding it out. But the very first person he met as he drew back the portière was Mildred's father.

"Ah, Yates," said that gentleman, beaming cordially upon him. "What a great stranger you are!"

"I—oh, yes—how do you do, Mr. Lawrence?" stammered Philip.

"Now this is really a delightful occasion, isn't it?" There was absolutely no constraint in Mr. Lawrence's manner. Possibly the unimportant fact that this young man's engagement with his daughter had been broken off, and that the two were no longer on speaking terms, had quite escaped his memory. "Our friend Baretta has done very well—very well indeed. Of course, you know, I don't agree with him; he carries his theories a little too far—just a little too far. But when you come to think of it, there's a good deal of truth in what he says, after all. No doubt our society needs reorganization, eh?"

"Reorganization is a rather mild word for revolution, isn't it, sir?" asked Philip, who had regained in some measure his self-control.

"Oh, I don't think our friend is exactly a revolutionist. Perhaps he says just a little more than he means. I dare say that his new position in the world will sober him. He's been very modest about it—that's one thing I like in him. He never boasted about his family. In fact, you know, I took him at first for one of a far different class. He used to come to our

Union, you know. A most intelligent young man—a most clever young man.”

“I dare say,” observed Philip, rather dejectedly.

“Don’t you find his conversation remarkably interesting?”

“Yes—oh, of course. I—I suppose you see a good deal of him?”

“Well, we have been away all summer, you know. But, as I said, we take a great interest in him.”

Philip studied the pattern of the rug on which he was standing intently a moment before he spoke again. “Ah, that is quite natural,” he said at last. He felt that it was a banal remark, but no other occurred to him. Perhaps he was thinking how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man’s eyes.

Mr. Lawrence waited a moment to see if he had anything further to say, and then, finding he had not, moved on with a bland bow. He must have had the impression, however, that Yates, and not himself, had done most of the talking; for when he drifted back into the next room and found his daughter still with Baretta, he plunged into the conversation by saying, “Oh, you have made a great hit—a great hit. Yates has just been talking about it—you know Philip Yates? He has a high opinion of you; he thinks you’re immensely clever.”

Mildred flushed crimson, the more as she felt that Baretta’s eyes were fixed upon her with an inquiring gaze—an impertinent one, she thought it.

“Oh, does he?” asked Baretta. “That’s exceedingly kind of him.”

Mildred looked up suddenly and detected the sneer which played about his lips as he spoke. But still she said nothing.

“He’s clever himself,” said Mr. Lawrence. “His praise is worth something.”

“No doubt, Mr. Lawrence, no doubt,” said the young man, hastily. “Oh yes, I have known Yates very well. I like him; I think he will succeed—some day. But I fancied that you thought—that you would not care—” He felt that Miss Lawrence was staring at him haughtily, and that, singularly enough, she was not pleased with this depreciation of the man who had be-

haved so badly to her. He was quite convinced that Yates had behaved badly.

"Every one is saying the same thing; every one is delighted;" observed Mr. Lawrence, beginning to understand that his allusion to Yates had been unfortunate. "You will be quite the lion of the hour—I really think you will. But I want to have a long talk with you. Come home and dine with us."

"I—I thank you," stammered Baretta. "If—if you are sure it will be convenient—if Miss Lawrence—" he added, turning to Mildred.

"I am sorry to say that I dine out to-night, Mr. Baretta," said that young lady, coldly. "But I am sure that my father will be glad of your company."

She nodded rather stiffly and turned to speak to Miss Tredwell, who had just tapped her on the shoulder and whispered a word in her ear. Baretta felt that he hated Miss Tredwell, and he scowled at her as she drew Miss Lawrence away. "You're very kind, Mr. Lawrence; I'll come with pleasure," he said. But there was not much pleasure in his look. He suspected that Miss Lawrence's engagement to dine out had been very hastily made.

CHAPTER XIX

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

NEVERTHELESS, Baretta came away from Mrs. Cadwallader's in high spirits. The incense of flattery was very exhilarating, and he had enjoyed a great deal of it. He had always felt confident that he would succeed, but the realization of his hopes was even beyond expectation. He did not question the genuineness of the polite applause which followed his lecture. He was sure that all these people were immensely interested in what he had to say, because they were immensely interested in him. The rebuff that he had received from Mildred Lawrence made him very angry for the moment. Afterwards he was rather inclined to pity her for not appreciating his society at its true value. The day would come, he told himself, when she would be proud to know him. Baron Smolzow was a very different person from Francis Baretta. As for that impertinent Miss Tredwell, he would get even with her yet. She was a friend of Yates—he had seen them talking together—and of course she was his enemy. He had told Yates that he ought to thank him for his introduction to Mrs. Cadwallader; but in truth he was not in the least grateful. He was no longer in a position where he could be patronized by anybody. He was not the unknown adventurer who had thought it a great thing to be asked to one of Mrs. Chilton's afternoons. Just now he was flying for higher game than that.

Mrs. Cadwallader had been very gracious when he called with Yates, and he soon felt quite at his ease with her, in spite of what had seemed to him the oppressive elegance of her surroundings. In the necessities of his early training the æsthetic

side of his nature had been somewhat neglected, and all these screens and easels and vases and scarfs and draperies had somewhat bewildered him. The difference between the life which he had led and the life which he wanted to lead had never before impressed him so strongly. He saw now how many things of which the dwellers in Arragon Street knew nothing were regarded as necessities in the great world—how that world had an atmosphere of its own which one must, as it were, learn to breathe. He felt that his perception of life had been immensely enlarged by his appreciation of this fact; if the finer distinctions, the smaller details, were still vaguely outlined in his mind, that was because he had not yet had time to study them. That time was all he needed he did not doubt. While Mrs. Cadwallader and Yates talked he listened intently, although he found many of their allusions incomprehensible. It seemed to him, as he thought it over afterwards, that they had talked nothing but nonsense; which was an easy way to dismiss things one did not understand. Perhaps Mrs. Cadwallader even found her Socialist baron a rather stupid lion, and began to doubt whether she had done wisely in asking Yates to lead him into the arena. Baretta came away, however, feeling that he had at least made no blunder, and was slightly patronizing to Yates, as a man who was getting on had a right to be to a man who amounted to nothing in particular. Yates, indeed, bade him good-bye rather curtly, and did not offer to take him to any more of the “best houses,” an omission which, after all, was not a serious one now. Baretta went again to see Mrs. Cadwallader, alone this time, and made a much better impression. He talked about himself, a subject upon which he was always eloquent, and of his work and his economic ideas—things which Mrs. Cadwallader found entertaining because of their novelty. Therefore she concluded that this new lion would roar loudly enough for a single season, and that she might ask people to come and hear him. In *le monde ou l'on s'ennuie* anything that promises a sensation is not to be lightly spurned. Her decision was a great piece of good-fortune for Baretta, although, perhaps, he did not appreciate it fully. There were plenty of houses where even less conspicuous persons than he were welcome, and to go to which conferred

the immortality of newspaper paragraphs. Mrs. Chilton, for example, represented one social cult. But at Mrs. Cadwalader's alone Society and Upper Bohemia met on common ground. She had the gift of reconciling these usually jarring elements. There were those of greater consequence than Albert Hazard Pinkerton or Georgiana Linley who came to hear him talk about Socialism. He did not quite recognize this fact at the time, although he was duly impressed at meeting the son of a marquis; he had not been a baron long enough to treat titles as familiar things.

The company this afternoon was composed of rather more miscellaneous elements than usual, and Baretta had comparatively scant opportunities of making new acquaintances. Talking to people one didn't know was still a difficult task; indeed, it was the apparent informality of the very formalities of society which perplexed him most. Of course one could brush such things aside as foolish, and take refuge in the reflection that reorganized humanity would not want them; still, that was not very satisfactory as a temporary expedient. Baretta wandered off into a corner after he had accepted Mr. Lawrence's invitation to dinner, and glared unamiably at the swaying and murmuring throng as it swept by. One has lonely moments even when one is getting on in the world and has become a lion, or perhaps a whelp that promises to be a lion some day. Baretta was not sorry presently to see drifting in his direction Mr. Hamilton Wreath, whom he had met at Mrs. Chilton's, and whom he remembered as being interested in Socialism from a realistic point of view. He observed that Mr. Wreath still wore the frock-coat and white tie that Mr. Allen had made fun of, but he fancied that the hair and beard of the great realistic author were less unkempt than usual. Mr. Wreath had eyes of peculiar brightness, and a habit of fixing them very intently upon any one with whom he talked; for which he would apologize by saying that he was a student of human nature, and that to portray it accurately one must observe it closely. He fixed his eyes upon Baretta now with something of the air of one who has discovered a new specimen.

"You have had great opportunities, Baron," said Mr. Wreath,

placing one hand in the breast of his tightly buttoned coat and brushing back his black locks with the other. "I dare say they have given you a sense of consecration to the cause of suffering humanity. Ah, that is what we all—those of us who ponder deeply upon the underlying principles of life—all have deeply at heart. I recognize you as a coworker, Baron."

"Oh!" exclaimed Baretta, scowling slightly. "I didn't know that you had done any practical work in that direction."

"Practical—ah, practical!" said Mr. Wreath with a deprecatory smile. "That is a word which means so much—or so little."

"Well, I'm sure I don't know what *you* mean. To any one who understands what the condition of the poor in our large cities is there isn't any doubt of the way to set at work to help them."

"Are you so certain of that? It's an interesting point: you will see how I have worked it out in my new story, if you will take the trouble to read it. I have called it 'Jared Evans, an Every-day Man'—it is studied from life, I assure you. Oh, I walked up and down a place called Arragon Street a half an hour, to get the local colour."

"Arragon Street!" Baretta could not help exclaiming.

"Oh, do you know it? Of course, of course—your work must have taken you there at some time. Well, now, I tried to fancy what lives those people must lead—what wretched lives, full of misery and filth and sin. Ah! ah!" wailed Mr. Wreath, lifting his eyes to the ceiling, "my heart bleeds for them—it, does indeed."

Baretta scowled again. "That's exceedingly kind of you."

"Now why," continued Mr. Wreath—"why should not my story be as practical as your work? It attracts the attention of the public—that's the main thing. One who reads it cannot help feeling that it is terribly true. There's no romantic nonsense about it. The New Art, of which I, as well as Mr. Nowells, am proud to call myself a disciple, sticks to the hard, grim, uncompromising truth. In fact, I think I go rather beyond Mr. Nowells. You won't find any flowers of fancy, any mere ornamentation of style, in 'Jared Evans.' Oh, it has made an im-

mense sensation; people see in it the dawn of a new literary era. Isn't that the case, Mr. Black?" added the novelist, turning to a tall young man with a languid and somewhat supercilious air, who was drifting by. "This is my friend Mr. Black, the eminent critic, Baron Smolzow. I dare say you have read that charming department of his in the *Massachusetts Magazine*—'In an Attic at Podsnap's.' No? Oh, you must read it."

"Mr. Wreath flatters me," said Mr. Black.

"No, no; I am not the only one who appreciates your talents highly," protested Mr. Wreath. "Our hostess admires your work. 'Do you know Mr. Black—Mr. V. Hartburn Black? You must bring him with you to hear Baron Smolzow'—those were her very words."

"Oh, I dare say I sometimes manage to shine a little by reflected light from Mr. Wreath." The eminent critic's manner was more complacent than his words, and he looked at Baretta as if he expected to be contradicted. But as Baretta said nothing he went on: "Perhaps you are not interested in the New Art—and, if I may say so, in the New Criticism. You should be; one with your practical knowledge of the dark problems of life would find our way of dealing with them immensely suggestive. Our friend Wreath, now—you might call him the apostle of scientific realism in literature. His stories do not aim simply to amuse; they are practical disquisitions in sociology. That is the truth I am trying in my poor way to impress upon the public; but the public, alas! is a stupid animal."

"Very likely," admitted Baretta. "But all this sort of thing seems to me like child's play. What do your millionaires care for the struggling masses so long as they have the power? And what good can a little cheap philanthropy do, anyway? No; the millions must do something more than complain; they must make themselves felt; they must say, 'We are the masters and you are our servants.' Then they will accomplish something."

"That is all very well," said Mr. Wreath. "But if my stories don't do any good, what will your lectures amount to?"

"I didn't come here to be insulted!" cried Baretta, angrily. He hesitated a moment, glaring at the offending novelist with something of the look of a wild animal. "I guess I've had

enough of you," he added, curtly, turning his back and walking away.

Mr. Wreath looked at Mr. Black and Mr. Black looked at Mr. Wreath. "Well!" exclaimed the critic.

"He'll do for my next story," said the novelist.

"What can you expect of a fellow from the slums?" asked Mr. Black.

Baretta felt that he had made a mistake, and he blamed himself for losing his temper. No man could afford to make enemies unnecessarily. After all, why should he have resented so bitterly what was at most a slight impertinence? Somehow or other it took very little to upset him in these days; his nerves seemed to be getting altogether beyond his control. It must be that his changed fortunes had unsettled him.

And how greatly, how very greatly, they had changed! He thought of this as he walked home to Manchester Square that evening after dining with Mr. Lawrence. He got away from Mrs. Cadwallader's a little before six, flattered to the top of his bent by congratulations the sincerity of which he did not question. Why should he? Did not he himself know better than any one else how well deserved they were? His moral proportions were coming to be truly heroic in his own eyes. How much he had sacrificed for the welfare of humanity! Baretta was honestly beginning to believe this; so much depends upon the point of view. He kept projecting his present into his past, as it were, and thinking of the Francis Baretta who had lived in Arragon Street as the Baron Smolzow who delivered lectures on Socialism in Mrs. Cadwallader's drawing-room; by which means the old associations took on as much incongruity in reminiscence as they would have had now if they had never been broken off. It was Baron Smolzow who had thought of marrying Maud Dolan because he was not good enough for Mildred Lawrence—Baron Smolzow, who had all Boston at his feet (this was his somewhat exaggerated way of putting it), and who was good enough for anybody. He had assumed the title without contradiction, although he had not yet established any legal claim. Those proofs which the editor of the *Mail* had said he ought to have were still missing. He had made his existence known

to the Austrian Government through the United States Legation at Vienna, and the correspondent of the *Banner*, who had written that glowing account of the estates at Bataszek, was most earnest in his endeavours to impress the official mind with the credibility of the coincidence. But there was an anxiety to trace the history of Paul Baretta after his flight from Hungary in 1848, with which the *Banner* correspondent did not sympathize, but which interfered with any official recognition of the claims of his putative son. The amiable advocate who represented the noble house of Smolzow smiled when he was told that the claimant had already assumed the title, but declared that, although this could not be helped, the property most certainly would not be given up by the next of kin on the strength of a mere assertion. Perhaps the breezy letter in the *Banner* on the stupidity of foreigners, particularly Austrians, will be recalled by some readers; it was widely copied by the American press, and was the subject of editorial comment in several journals from the Jacksonville *Clarion* to the Los Angeles *Eagle*. However, all the satire in the world could not advance the case of Baron Smolzow a single jot. The proofs were still wanting. Baretta had come so near to believing in his own pretensions that he was actually angry to think that his father had been so careless. His father! Perhaps his father might be alive, and might be able to give him some information which would be of service to him. He really could not think that there was no connection whatever between the Hungarian noble and the Hungarian barber of the same name, who had both come to America in 1848. But he shrank from trying to find a relative of whom his recollections were not pleasant, and who he was sure would be no credit to him now. Once or twice desperate suggestions of devising false documents crossed his mind; but he rejected them, not so much from any moral scruples, as because in his ignorance of what such documents ought to be he was fearful of committing some gross and fatal blunder which would at once expose him as a pretender. No one could call him that so long as he was content simply to say, "I am the son of Paul Baretta, and if I am not Baron Smolzow, who is?" Such a position was unassailable, and he felt that he was wise in sticking to it.

At the same time this young man, who was getting on so rapidly in the world, had other problems to consider. It was all very well to deliver lectures in drawing-rooms and write for the newspapers; but, after all, these were not fitting avocations for a scion of the noble house of Smolzew. He had, indeed, another object in view, although he was chary of admitting it even to himself. This was to marry Mildred Lawrence. Once he had realized that such an ambition was in the highest degree presumptuous. She was out of his star, and he could only worship her in silent adoration. But now everything was changed. Why was not he an equal match for her, at least so far as the world knew? That the world did not know the truth was a very potent factor in the situation; but he disregarded it and never once reproached himself with doing anything dishonourable. He was aware of a certain coldness in Miss Lawrence's manner for which he could not account; but he did not think that it meant dislike. Perhaps some of her friends were trying to prejudice her against him. It would be just like that odious Miss Tredwell to try to do something of the kind. He felt an unreasoning animosity to Miss Tredwell, who would no doubt think that Yates, who was really a very ordinary sort of fellow, was a better match for her friend. He was confident, however, that Mr. Lawrence thought highly of him, and would be impressed with the honour of having a baron for a son-in-law. After all, what did these old New England families, with their exaggerated pride in their ancestry, amount to? Mr. Lawrence had treated him quite as an equal at dinner—a circumstance which he regarded as significant, because he did not even yet wholly understand the ways of gentlemen. Baretta still preached social equality, but his manner towards those whom he regarded as his inferiors was one of condescension. It never occurred to him that he had been at all ungrateful to his old associates—to Ditton, to Maud Dolan, and the rest. As for Ditton, it was he himself who had brought about the breach between them, out of his own petty jealousy and spite. He had been a little troubled about Maud at first. The poor girl was certainly very fond of him, and it seemed cruel to abandon her altogether. But then was it not really her own fault? Of course the time must have come when she would

see the futility of expecting that he would marry her. Nevertheless, he had not intended to break off their relations absolutely. He would have been best pleased if he had been given an opportunity to declare his willingness to sacrifice himself for her. It would be a sacrifice; he would have had to admit that if she had asked him, and then she would have seen how impossible it was that he should make it. Maud had not let him play any such role as that. She had not even attempted to keep him; she had cut the tangled skein at a stroke, and had gone away feeling, no doubt, that she had been very badly used. He could hardly help taking the same view of the case at first; but afterwards he convinced himself that his behaviour had been irreproachable, and that this abrupt severance was altogether Maud's fault. It was like a woman not to give a man any chance to explain. He had intended to see her again, to set himself right in her eyes; but the convenient moment had never come. Perhaps it was best, after all, that they should not meet.

It was nearly ten o'clock when Baretta ascended the stairs to his room. When he reached the landing he was surprised to see a light shining through the chink under the door. Who could be calling upon him at that hour? and why should his visitor be waiting? He hesitated a moment outside with a curious sensation, half of alarm, half of fear. Pooh! He did not believe in presentiments of evil, as people called them. He opened the door and entered boldly.

His visitor was a stranger—a man past middle age, with long gray hair and a curly gray beard. He rose as Baretta entered and smiled blandly. Baretta simply stared and did not speak.

"I see you haf forgotten me," said the man, smiling again. "Vell, it ees a long time—a long time."

That voice, with its queer foreign accent—was it not familiar? A confused flood of memories seemed to surge through Baretta's brain as he listened. "I—I'm sure I don't remember," he stammered at last.

"Oh, ho! You haf forgotten. It was because you veeshed to forget. You run away—you tink you never see your old fader again. But here he ees! I am he!"

CHAPTER XX

A PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

"You!" cried Baretta, falling back a step and gazing at the intruder with a look in which scorn and fear were strangely mingled. "You!" he repeated, after a moment of silence, during which his father's face wore an expression of amused expectancy. "Why—why, I should never have known you—I did not think you were living."

"And haf mourned for me bittairely—ees it not so? *Ach! ja—I guess!*" And the unwelcome visitor laughed scornfully.

"How do I know now that you are my father?" demanded Baretta, beginning to regain his self-control, and trying to meet this unexpected situation calmly.

"*Mein Sohn!* haf not die Natur spik?" The elder Baretta raised both arms with a theatrical air. "*Il ne nous reste qu'une chose a faire. Embrassons nous!*"

"What gibberish are you talking now?" asked the young man, impatiently.

"Ah, you understand not *la langue Française? Verstehst du nicht Deutsch! wie?—nur ein wenig?* You haf neglect your studies—we shall haf to see to those. And after all dese years you are not glad to see your fader!"

"I wish you would talk sense. Why should I be glad to see you? What have you ever done for me?"

"You nefer gafe me the chance. You run away at twelve—I search and search, and nefer see you more. But we will for-geef each other." Mr. Baretta suddenly sprang forward and threw his arms about his son's neck. "Ah! it brings tears to the eyes, *mein Sohn!*"

Baretta met this paternal appeal by shaking himself free and scowling savagely. "Well, what do you want of me?" he asked, throwing aside his hat and coat. "Because I haven't any money," he added.

"Money!" cried the other, angrily. "I ask you not for money. *Gott im Himmel!* I come to see you after so long years and you tell me you haf no money. Tam your money!"

"Well, we can't do any good by quarrelling. If you are my father, and can prove it—"

"Prove it! prove it! Why, look here, do you tink you can peetch me ofer like dees? Your face tells me that you know me—what proof need I?"

And indeed to this question Baretta could frame no answer. Why had he not anticipated such an obvious emergency as this? He might have known that some time the parent whom he had abandoned would seek him out. He looked at the old man—his father seemed to him to be old, although he could not have been much over sixty—and wondered what his object in coming had been.

"So you are a great man—Baron Smolzow! I haf read it all in the papers." Mr. Baretta laughed again as if the idea were highly amusing.

Baron Smolzow! the name somehow recalled Binney's remark about the need of proofs. Might it not be well for him, after all, that his father had turned up just at this crisis? Oh no—there could be no doubt that he was his father; Baretta saw in his face, despite the gray hair and beard, a dim reflection of his own—worn and marked by years and dissipations, but still his own. "Won't you take a seat?" he said at last, more gently than he had yet spoken. "I—I was a little confused by the suddenness of it all; I didn't mean to be rude to you."

"Ah, you are kind—*vous êtes vraiment trop aimable.*" Mr. Baretta drew out the only arm-chair which the room contained and stretched himself at length in it. "*Je suis charmé de faire votre connaissance, mon fils.* But I forgot—you spik only English?" He shook his head with an air of gentle melancholy. "You haf neglect so much; you have no kind fader's care. *C'est trop fort.*"

"A father's care!" exclaimed the young man, scowling. "What good would it have been to me? I have made my way by my own efforts. No one has helped me—no one. But what use is it all," he added, bitterly, "if you have come to drag me down at the last?"

"To drag you down!" repeated the other, mockingly. "I—Baron Smolzow! It ees your honour to be my son."

"You!" exclaimed Baretta. "Why do you call yourself that?"

"Ees it possible you do not understand? Pardon, but haf you any veesky? No? It was ordered for me by my physician—but nefare mind. Ah, François, I am a seeck man—I am not long for dis world. You hate me—you vish me tedt. You haf not long to wait—*eh, bien!*"

"I don't wish you dead. Why should you say that?"

"So? Do I mistake? But you know, *du verstehst*, that you cannot be the Herr Baron Smolzow until I die. What! It ees I, Paul Baretta, who follows my cousin. Ah, ah! It ees a grandt day for me after all dese years." Mr. Baretta rose, smiling, and held out his hand. "Forget and forgif the past—you vill not run away from your fader, der Herr Baron—*eh?*"

"Damnation!" cried Baretta, stung to sudden fury by what seemed to him to be his father's insolent air of triumph. He saw in a moment what a fool he had been. Of course if the Paul Baretta who came to America in 1848 was still alive, it was he, and not his son, who would inherit the estate. But who would have thought that this drunken barber—such was the image of his father which Baretta had carried in his mind all these years—would care enough about an empty honour to put in a claim for it. The young man was sure that it would be an empty honour so far as Paul Baretta was concerned—that he could not pass, as his son could, for a creditable member of the Hungarian nobility. Very possibly he underrated his newly-found parent's cleverness, although he realized sufficiently that he was clever enough to make an uncomfortable antagonist. The son walked up and down the room scowling, while the father, still with extended hand, smiled blandly. "Damnation!" muttered Baretta a second time.

"You do not seem to be gladd," observed Mr. Baretta. "Do you tink not to shake hands mit me, to spik to me?" He waited for his son to reply, but finding that he said nothing, went on, "You haf not treated me as I expect, François. You haf gifen me no velcome—you show me no affection. Well—so! I go as I come. But if I go, you will nefare be Baron Smolzew—nefare while I leef!"

Francis stopped and looked at his father angrily. "What do you mean by that?"

"Ah, ah! you vill see—*mon Dieu!* you vill see!"

"Do you threaten me?"

Mr. Baretta shrugged his shoulders, and walking towards the table in the centre of the room, picked up his hat. "You haf no veesky? *Das thut mir leid*—it is goot for my troat. Ah, I haf been many times seeck, with no one by to peety me." He waved his hat slowly back and forth with an air of subdued melancholy. "My son—my only son—left me alone in my old age—I who haf suffaired so mooch!"

"Left you alone!" cried Francis. "Where would I have been if I had stayed with you?"

"You are ungrateful. It ees the vicked son who spiks thus to his fader." Mr. Baretta put his hat on his head and folded his arms. "But I forgeef you," he added; "I forgeef you."

All this was very exasperating, but it occurred to the young man that his father was in a position to injure him a good deal if he chose, and that however burdensome his presence might be, it was much more endurable than a vague presentiment of evil in his absence. "I do not wish to treat you badly," he said, rather sullenly. "Won't you sit down?"

"Ah, my son! my son!" exclaimed Mr. Baretta, taking off his hat and laying it upon the table once more. "I am a foolish old man—I forget all the past—I take you to my heart—if I had the veesky for my troat."

"See here—I'll go out and get you some if that is what you want, though I don't think it's good for you. Will you wait till I come back?"

"Oh yes—I wait; I am not beesy dese days." He thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a few coppers. "See!"

'tis all the geld I haf—oh, I haf been so seeck—it was notings I could do to keep the volf from the door."

"Well, I'm poor enough," said Baretta, ungraciously. Poor! he muttered to himself when he was in the street. Had his father sought him out in the hope that he was rich and would be able to supply him with the luxuries that a man with more fondness for whiskey than for work would expect? If this was his object he must be made to see at once how futile it would be. When a man has no money one certainly can't get money out of him. Baretta thought that if his father were once made to understand this thoroughly he might be willing to go away and trouble him no more. What could he gain by staying? This was really the important point, because it was not at all likely that the author of his being had sought the young man out simply because he was anxious to be reunited to him. He had had time enough for that in all these years, if he had really cared. It was true enough, Baretta told himself, that his father could annoy him a great deal. His very existence in this tangible form was a menace to all his plans. Baron Smolzow! Of course, when you came to think about it, the title belonged to the father and not to the son. Baretta had hitherto thought of his father only as a drunken barber of whom he was well rid; but he began to suspect him of being almost as clever as himself—of being able to devise and carry through schemes in his own interest. This was a contingency which he had not contemplated, and which threatened to alter his position distinctly for the worse. Clever the elder Baretta might be, but no one would even for a moment be deceived into thinking him a gentleman and the heir of the noble house of Smolzow; so that the good impression which the younger had made would go for naught, and all his hopes of even being a pretender to the title and estates would be dashed to the ground at once. It would be maddening to fail on the very threshold of success; indeed, the young man felt that he could not stay to face failure—that his career would be over as soon as the blow fell; and therefore the question was how to avert the blow altogether. He wished that he could find out exactly what his father's object was in coming to him. It did not seem likely that mere love of mischief had

impelled him. Was it to claim the title? Baretta thought that the assertion of this right had been made by the elder man chiefly as a threat—that he had no real intention of trying to make it good. If this were the case how could he be persuaded to keep out of the way? It would be absurd to have Paul Baretta, who disappeared from the view of the family of Smolzow so many years ago, and whose own son believed him dead, resurrected in this sudden fashion. Absurd was hardly the word, this son thought, in view of what it would imply. The wreck of all his aspirations would be tragic.

There was another way to look at it—a way which occurred to Baretta as he was returning to Manchester Square with the flask of whiskey which he had set out to purchase for his father's immediate needs. His father might be as well able to help him as to ruin him. He thought again of his need of proofs to establish his claim to the title of Baron and the estates at Bataszek. Was it not possible that Paul Baretta, being dead, might yet speak and divulge some information of value to his heir? That his father was really the cousin of the late baron he did not for a moment believe. There had been times when he had half persuaded himself that he was what he impersonated—when he thought of the deception which he was practising as a venial sin, as hardly a deception at all. But somehow his father's return had given it an uglier aspect. As he thought of gaining information from that source he felt like a criminal who needed an accomplice. "Why should I struggle against Fate at all?" he asked himself; and perhaps for a moment there was a half-formed resolution in his mind to abandon all that he had been working for, and to be content with life under the old conditions. What was the use of the struggle? These people whose doors he had begun to enter merely tolerated him. Besides, nothing that he could do would bring Mildred Lawrence any nearer. He had better go back to Arragon Street and to Maud. Poor Maud! would she forgive him—would she tell him once more that no one could ever love him as she did? His heart was torn with self-pity as he realized that he had really missed Maud during all these weeks. Oh yes—it would be better for him to go back! He

mounted the stairs to his room again feeling curiously sick at heart.

"Ah, the veesky!" cried his father, rising quickly as he entered. "*Ach, mein Sohn, bist du*—are you seeck? You are so pale—so *bleich*." He opened the flask when Baretta handed it to him, and sniffed at it critically. "Here, trink some," he said, holding it out.

"No, no—I am quite well; I am only a little tired," said Baretta, impatiently.

"Dot means you vas tired of me. It ees a cruel ting to say. It means you scorn me—you do not veesh me to help you. But no mataire." He raised the glass to his lips and hastily swallowed the contents. "Ah, it is goot for my troat!"

"Help me?" cried the young man. "How can you help me?"

"It is no mataire. If you would trink some veesky you would be a different man. But you scorn me. *Eh, bien!* you know best."

Baretta took a few turns up and down the room before he spoke. "See here, father," he said at last, "there is no reason in the world why we should quarrel. I did not mean to scorn you, as you call it. Indeed, I am very glad to see you, though of course it upset me a little at first—your coming so unexpectedly. I don't suppose you minded very much my running away from you twelve years ago. Anyway, I've looked after myself pretty well, and I think I can say that I have a pretty good chance now."

"Oh, ho! a chance. *Jawohl, mein Sohn*, a goot chance. Your fader is der Herr Baron Smolzew."

"Yes, yes—I suppose you are. But what good is the title to you? Now in my case it is different. No one knows of you—they all think you are dead and that I am the heir. Look here, I wouldn't drink too much of that stuff, if I was you; it won't do you any good."

"My troat, my poor troat," murmured Mr. Baretta, as he drained the glass for the second time. "And so dey tink me dead, eh? It ees vat you veesh, no doubt, but I do not find it agreeable."

"Why should any one know you were alive? I did not know it myself. But that isn't the point. You have seen the story in the papers—"

"Ah, *mein Vetter, der Herr Graf*—my cousin, Baron Smolzow. I read it all. Do you not see? I am all in black."

"If you wouldn't keep interrupting me!" cried the young man, petulantly. "What I was going to say was this: it can't be any particular advantage to you to be the Baron, whereas to me it is everything—everything!"

Mr. Baretta laughed boisterously. "Ho! ho! it is a great plot. You pay to bury me—*natürlich*."

"You understand, then? I haven't much money, but—"

"Ah, *mein Sohn*, der funeral sharge are heafy."

"Oh, well!" cried the young man, impatiently, "if you think you can bleed me indefinitely, there's an end of it—there's no use in discussing the matter at all. You can tell your story all over town, if you like. What difference does it make to you if you destroy all I have done, if you put me back where I was when I left you to make my own way in the world?"

Mr. Baretta sighed. "It is stranche to me where you get your hartness of heart, François," he said. "It was from your moder—not from me. I am a veak fool. My gootness has been my ruin."

"Ruin!" exclaimed his son, bitterly. "You do well to talk of ruin. That's what you're bringing to me."

"Ah! you tink so?" Mr. Baretta stroked his beard thoughtfully for several minutes, studying the scowling countenance opposite to him with an air of impartial interest. "Dat is for you to say," he observed at last, smiling blandly.

"For me? What have I to do with it? I suppose you'll please yourself."

"You cannot be der Herr Baron Smolzow because you veesh it—because you say so; *cela ne peut pas être*. You have tried—ees it not so?—and found it impossible. *Eh, bien!* now you come to me, and I say I help you—*si cela vous est agréable*."

"I wish you'd drop all that lingo; I can't understand what you say."

"Ah—so?" Mr. Baretta smiled again, but not quite so

blandly. "Vell, I will make myself plain. Here I am—*moi, le Baron Smolzow*. Oh, you do not spik the tongue—*quel malheur!* I will remembaire. Vell, you cannot be the Baron while I stand in your way. So? I take myself out of your way. Pouf!" he cried, blowing at an imaginary feather, "I am gone. You are Baron Smolzow!"

"But I am no more the Baron than you are," cried the young man, irritably, "unless I have some proofs."

"Proofs! Ah, *mein Sohn!*" Mr. Baretta tapped his chest mysteriously. "If you knew what papers I haf!"

"Papers! proofs! You really have a claim? You are his cousin?"

"Ho! ho! See, now, how you would deceive. You tink you are no baron—I am no baron—and you still veesh to be baron, *nicht wahr?* Ah, François, ees it the vay I brought you up—to lie and sheat people?" And a tear glistened in the fond parent's eye.

"Of course you're not his cousin," said Baretta, scornfully, regaining his self-possession. "I'm not quite such a fool as to think that. Look here, now, father," he went on, "I've been turning the matter over in my mind, and this is what I want to say to you. Are you listening?"

"*Peu m'importe*: but I hear you—I leesten."

"Give the papers you speak of to me, and let me prove my claim."

"To you? and what for give dem to you? But pah!" cried Mr. Baretta, with a gesture of disgust, "it ees no sense at all dat we are talking."

The scowl deepened between the young man's eyes, and his mouth twitched nervously as he walked to and fro like some caged wild animal. Indeed, his position seemed to him not unlike that of the hunted creature at bay. He had thought he was conquering the world—that world of indifference and suspicion and jealousy which turns so stern a face to rising genius—and now here was a new enemy to grapple with, an attack from a quarter so unexpected that he seemed to have no means of defence. His father could demolish at a stroke the airy structure which he had been weaving; and why should he with-

hold his hand? What inducement could the son offer? He had no money—he had absolutely nothing for a bribe. His only argument was that whereas the title was worth nothing to his father, it was worth a good deal to him. But he felt that such an argument was rather banal—that the author of his being would find a certain satisfaction in pulling him back to the level from which he had started. It even struck him that the smile on his visitor's face—it had been almost constant from the outset—was beginning to change into a sneer. So he raged up and down the room for several minutes without speaking, stifling with an immense effort the wrath that threatened to overpower his self-control. "I will try to show you it is sense," said he, at last, facing his father as calmly as he could. "But I wish you wouldn't interrupt me."

"I am dumb. I spik not," Mr. Baretta leaned back in his easy-chair, and sighed luxuriously. "*Eh, bien!*" he cried, finding that the other said nothing, "*avez-vous quelque chose à me dire?*" You veesh to tell me sometings? Vill you pass me de veesky—my troat is very bad to-night. *Merci, François.* Go on—spik: I hear everytings."

"You speak about papers—about proofs," the young man went on. "Well, if you have them, mustn't you be the Paul Baretta who came to America in 1848—the missing cousin? And how could I know that you were not?" His father shook his head thoughtfully as these questions were put to him, but made no reply; and indeed it may have been as an argument addressed to his own conscience that Baretta asked them at all. "Now as long as he remains missing—that is, as long as you remain missing—who can dispute my claim? They say over there—I mean in Austria—that he was undoubtedly next of kin, and that if I am his son and heir the title and estates are mine. I don't know that I would have to prove his death; but proofs of some sort I must have. If you have such proofs, and could give them to me—"

"Also?" murmured Mr. Baretta, gently, as his son paused.

"Why," continued the young man, flushing slightly and stammering, "I—I would look after you—there would be money enough—"

"*Mon fils !*" cried Mr. Baretta, springing to his feet, "so you do tink of your fader in his old age. You, der Herr Baron Smolzow, will have enough for two—ces it not so? *Schön! schön!* you will be a better baron as I; you will be credit to a great house." He tapped his breast once more. "I haf papers here," he said. "You vill see dem—oh, soon—very soon. But I must tink over the mataire." He took up the bottle of whiskey and held it to the light. "I trink champagne to your Excellence to-morrow, eh?"

But his son merely looked at him and said nothing. There was not much exultation in his face.

CHAPTER XXI

TAKEN AT THE FLOOD

PEOPLE are fond of saying that this world is a sceptical place ; but that is one of those traditional cynicisms which will not bear the test of critical examination. As a matter of fact, the world is delightfully credulous ; any one who is moderately clever can convince it of almost anything. Of course every man has his enemies—ill-conditioned fellows who will persist in putting the worst construction upon his acts. But if he knows enough to take the current when it serves he need not worry about them ; and if he doesn't he ought to lose his ventures. The young Socialist who a few months ago was living in a single squalid room in Arragon Street had good reason to believe that he had embarked his fortunes at flood tide.

When he went to Mrs. Chilton's nowadays it was with a sense of condescension, not with a feeling of awe. Mrs. Chilton was a very nice sort of woman, and one certainly did meet agreeable people at her house. But it was different, after all, from Mrs. Cadwallader's. That distinguished leader of fashion, Mrs. Tom Gregorson, had never found her way to Pembroke Square. Mrs. Tom had heard of the South End, of course, but she had shrugged her shoulders when Baretta told her that Mrs. Chilton lived there, and had professed equal ignorance of Pembroke Square and of Mrs. Chilton herself ; nor did it occur to him that Mrs. Tom was a very clever woman and was probably amusing herself at his expense. A man who is trying to get on cannot afford to cultivate such an intellectual luxury as a sense of humour. Baretta only saw in Mrs. Tom's raillery another example of the narrowness of the Bostonian point of

view. But perhaps it had its effect in teaching him to look down a little upon Mrs. Chilton and her friends.

"I have heard of you much oftener than I have seen you," said Mrs. Chilton one Thursday afternoon, when he took the trouble to call. "But it is good of you to come. You know Mr. Pinkerton, don't you, Baron?"

Baretta recalled the circumstances of his first meeting with the eminent reader of Browning, and how supercilious—so he thought at the time—that gentleman's reception of him had been. "Ah, yes, I dare say I have met Mr. Pinkerton," he observed. "But one sees so many people that one forgets."

"Yes, Baron," retorted Mr. Pinkerton, with a smile of peculiar malignancy, "I should fancy one might find a short memory extremely convenient at times. Mrs. Hunsdon wanted me to tell you how sorry she was not to be able to come to-day," he added, addressing his hostess and turning his back upon Baretta, who flushed and bit his lip, and then after a moment of hesitation walked away.

"Oh, I always miss her so much," said Mrs. Chilton. "Why do you dislike the Baron?" she added, after a pause.

"Dislike him? Oh no—I don't give myself that trouble," replied Mr. Pinkerton. "It would be nearer the mark to say that I don't believe in him."

"Do you believe in anybody?"

"Ah, now you are giving me a Roland for my Oliver. But you can't make me quarrel with you about that fellow. You don't know how good-natured I can be when I try."

"And do you often try? But that isn't a very polite way of putting it," said Mrs. Chilton, smiling. "You mustn't take more than half of what I say in earnest."

"Which half? That is the important question." Mr. Pinkerton smiled too, but something in his look showed that the shaft had gone home.

Meanwhile Baretta was fuming inwardly at the insult—so he chose to regard it—which he had received. It seemed to him that he had shown a wonderful amount of self-control in not resenting it then and there. Perhaps he forgot that gentlemen do not as a rule make a lady's drawing-room the scene of hot words

or personal encounters. And then there may have been fear as well as rage in his heart. What did that fellow mean by talking about a short memory? Did he know or suspect the truth? It had been more than a chance shot; of that the young man was certain. And yet what could he know? Hadn't the proofs that Francis Baretta was the only son of Paul Baretta been ample enough? To be sure, he hadn't entered into the possession of those estates yet; the official mind is dreadfully slow in its operations. But all that would come in time. Why should Mr. Pinkerton talk about a short memory?

"It's really cruel of you, Mr. Baretta, to make me feel my insignificance so keenly," said a voice in his ear.

"Oh, indeed—I beg you pardon!" he said, with a start. It was Miss Tredwell who had spoken, and who now stood smiling at him.

"And yet you were looking straight at me," said Daisy. "Oh, I haven't forgot how you snubbed me the first time I met you."

"I—I think you must be mistaken," stammered Baretta. He disliked this young woman intensely, and it irritated him thus to lose his self-possession—to show himself deficient in the gift of raillery, which was apparently the first requisite for conversation in the higher circles of society. "I didn't see you, anyway," he added, bluntly.

"Oh, that makes it much worse—that is really dreadfully rude."

"I guess I can't please you whatever I do," said the young man, scowling.

Daisy shot a sudden glance of dislike at him—a glance which he did not observe at all—and then seated herself and looked up at him smilingly. "When I want to talk to people I can forgive their being rude," she said.

"And do you want to talk to me? I can't imagine why."

Daisy shook her fluffy golden head mysteriously. "I dare say imagination isn't your strong point, Mr. Baretta. Will you sit down? There is room enough." She drew her chair aside and nodded at the vacant place on the sofa beside her.

"You are too kind. It isn't rude to say that."

what he was thinking was why in the world this young woman should pretend to care for his conversation at all. He felt positive that she disliked him—that she was his secret enemy. And he for his part absolutely hated her. She was the last person in the room he would willingly talk to. If it was not friendship that impelled her, what was the motive? He resolved that he would be very cautious. A man who wants to get on has to look sharply for pitfalls.

“You can afford to spend a few minutes in enlightening my ignorance, I know,” said Daisy, graciously. “One must know all that is going on—mustn’t one? And I am so stupid that I didn’t understand everything you said at Mrs. Cadwallader’s.”

“Do you mean by that, Miss Tredwell, that you are really interested in—in my lectures?”

“Interested in Socialism? Why not? Here in Boston one has to be interested in everything. And then, I am sure, Baron”—Daisy made a little grimace unseen by Baretta—“that the work you are carrying on is different from some other things. It means so much to humanity.”

Something in this last phrase struck her listener as odd, and he looked at her keenly, as if he suspected that she was not quite sincere. But her bright blue eyes had never been more honest—her smile never more artless. “Oh, well, of course,” said Baretta at last, hesitatingly; “you are right—quite right. But I didn’t suppose people—like you—cared much for that.”

Daisy laughed. “Oh, Mr. Baretta, your rudeness is diverting, positively diverting. Forgive me, but I forget to call you by your proper title when you talk like that. I dare say you don’t always remember yourself, do you?”

Again he scanned her face. “Well, it was all very sudden,” he said, “and very wonderful. But fortunately I had no difficulty in proving my claim to the title. And, of course, the estates must come later.”

“Later—oh yes, later,” repeated Daisy. “Many things will come later. Tell me, however, do you really intend to stick to Socialism, now that you are such a great man? To Socialism—and all your old associations?”

“My old associations? What do you mean by that?” The

question had come upon him so suddenly that he had lost his self-control just for a moment ; and thus she had seen the look of terror in his eyes.

"Well, if you don't know!" said Daisy, laughing again. "Every one has associations of some sort, even if they're nothing more than relatives."

"My father died when I was a mere boy—my mother I never knew." Baretta scowled as he said this, and turned away, half angrily.

"So you have said," observed the girl, calmly. "Oh, I hope you don't think I mean to be impertinent; I hope you are not angry," she added, touching his arm lightly, and leaning forward with a look of entreaty.

"Of course not; it isn't worth making a fuss about. But I don't know why you should have so poor an opinion of me, Miss Tredwell—why you should think I am not in earnest in my work."

"Ah, you take too much for granted! I never said I had a poor opinion of you. Besides," added Daisy, rising, "my opinion wouldn't count. There is Miss Linley coming in—you ought to try to convert her."

Baretta was greatly puzzled by this conversation, which kept recurring to him all through the afternoon, even while he was talking with other people. Some of Miss Tredwell's remarks had seemed to have a double significance. What had she meant by old associations? It was not possible that she had ever heard of Arragon Street—and of Maud. The recollection of Maud struck him with a sudden chill. Poor Maud! who had been so very much in love with him, and whom he had promised to marry. No doubt if Miss Tredwell knew of that episode in his career she might make things disagreeable. But how could she know? And yet, somehow he felt that her remark had been intentional. Perhaps she had only been trying to make him commit himself—to entrap him into some confession which would injure him with Miss Lawrence. She had spoken about relatives, too, and had as good as intimated that she did not believe his story about his parents. But how could she really know anything? No one knew except himself. Confound all prying,

impertinent women! Miss Tredwell was a friend of Yates's, too; he had seen them talking together at Mrs. Cadwallader's. It would be just like Yates to make mean insinuations, to persuade her to enter into a plot against a rival. Baretta had no reason, of course, to suspect such a thing, but he was apt to be unreasonable when his own interests were concerned. Miss Lawrence had been very kind to him of late, but he was not at all sure of her feelings towards him. She was not like Maud. Even when she was kindest there was something in her manner which seemed to bid him keep at a distance. Sometimes he half regretted those old days, when Maud had told him how much she loved him. He woke in the night with the touch of her lips upon his, and found he had been dreaming of the past, which seemed sweeter in retrospect than it had been in realization. He would not have gone back to her if he could; and yet he missed her. Sometimes there was a touch of self-reproach in his musings. And yet, surely, it was she who had put an end to everything between them, and not he. Such a thing as marriage was impossible, but he had never told her so; she had taken it all for granted. Poor Maud! What did Miss Tredwell know of Maud? Why should she speak of old associations? These questions made him supremely uncomfortable. There are thorns in the cushion even when one is being courted and flattered.

Miss Linley, now, whom he had been told that he ought to convert—she was much more gracious than she had been once. She smiled as she saw him approaching across the room, and fixed her glasses a little more firmly upon her nose in preparation for the intellectual fray. Baretta recalled the time when she had dismissed him so insolently, and his manner was even more triumphant than usual as he returned her greeting. "It's a great pleasure, I'm sure," he said.

"Oh, really, Baron! It's good of you to say that, because there are so many things I want to talk to you about. There's scarcely any one here, is there?" asked Miss Linley, "so you can't have any excuse for running away."

"Wouldn't you call Mr. Pinkerton an excuse?"

"Mr. Pinkerton? I think he's odious."

"Well," said Baretta, "you were glad enough to talk to him once."

"What do you mean by that? You're very rude—I hope it isn't a part of Socialism to be rude."

"Oh, if you have forgotten!" he exclaimed. "But as to us Socialists—well, I suppose we shall have to be what you call rude. We're not likely to get our rights by asking for them hat in hand."

"I wish you would really explain what you think your rights are," said Miss Linley. "Of course you can't expect me to believe your theories; still I should like to understand them. I think it is one's duty to understand things. The intellectual tendencies of the time should be of as much interest to woman as to man. The day is past when the higher education is the privilege of one sex."

"Still, you know, women can't fight; and we have got to do that."

"But you must make your appeal to reason first, Baron; really, you must do that. I think that it is much grander to conceive of Socialism as an intellectual movement, than as an argument of brute force. I didn't know you advocated force. Couldn't you give a lecture at Cambridge? You could have our parlours—mamma is always pleased with the society of great minds. That's why she likes to live in Cambridge. And, then, it's so convenient to the Annex."

Baretta did not, however, accept at once Miss Linley's offer. He told her that he would be glad to come to Cambridge if he found that he could do so. He wanted to find out first if it would be any advantage to the cause which he had at heart, and incidentally, of course, to himself. Besides, he had not quite forgiven her for snubbing him once. It made a great difference, he told himself, whether a man was plain Francis Baretta or Baron Smolzow. But people must expect that the one would avenge the slights which the other had received. Magnanimity was an expensive virtue for a man who had his own way to make. It is true that he thought Miss Lawrence had also snubbed him, but he had a reason for forgiving her. He went to see her the very next afternoon, having previously devoted more time than

usual to his personal adornment. Once he had paid very little attention to the subject of dress. Fashionable clothes marked one of those distinctions which would be abolished when the time arrived for the true brotherhood of man. Nevertheless, it did make a difference when one had a position to maintain. Titles and class distinctions were odious; but so long as they lasted it would be sheer quixotic folly not to enjoy them. Besides, to be Baron Smolzow was an advantage to him in his work; it gave greater force to his appeal to Society. This was the final argument which he addressed to his conscience. And, of course, if he was to be a baron, he could not go about looking like a costermonger. He thought that he looked extremely well in his silk hat and buff top-coat, which he wore unbuttoned the better to display his neatly fitting black cutaway-coat and lavender trousers, and the big plated chain and seals that dangled from his waistcoat. The patent-leather shoes, the tan-coloured gloves which he carried in his right hand, and the red satin necktie with its Rhine-stone pin, were, he flattered himself, extremely neat; he was especially proud of the red necktie. He gave the man who opened the door a haughty glance, and asked for Miss Lawrence with the air of command which sat so well upon members of the aristocracy. There was nothing like letting these servants know their place, he told himself; the man had been rather patronizing to him, he thought, in his humbler days, and perhaps did not even yet realize his true rank and position. "That young bloke from the slums has come again, rigged out like a sport," was the man's comment when he went below stairs. "I don't see how they can abear him," said the cook. Perhaps Baretta's efforts to be impressive were not exactly successful, after all. He was only "that young bloke from the slums" to the servants, and his baronial honours were as nothing to them. It is an awful tribunal before which a man sits in his own house, and his guests also come under its jurisdiction. Baretta's history was perfectly well known in the Lawrence household; everything always is perfectly well known, even although not a living soul has breathed a word about it. There are birds of the air to carry the matter.

Baretta was annoyed to find that Miss Lawrence was not

alone. He could hardly have expected that she would be, of course; but that did not make his annoyance any less. How was he ever to make any progress—to fall into any real intimacy? These fine ladies were too notional—too fond of conventions: they were not like Maud, who had told him that no one would ever love him as she did. The phrase drifted across his memory with uncomfortable persistence; he kept thinking of it at all sorts of times, even when he was in the presence of Miss Lawrence herself. Surely this pale, cold, self-possessed young lady was not likely to love him at all! She was talking with a languid young man as Baretta entered the drawing-room, and she only rose to shake hands with him. He scowled fiercely at the languid youth, who had stared at him, as he thought, in an impertinent way, and to whom his hostess had not presented him. Baretta was enough used to the ways of society by this time to know that no slight was intended by the omission; and yet somehow it chafed him. How could one help feeling awkward in such a case? The entire indifference of the other man was exasperating. This was not the treatment which so eminent a personage as Baron Smolzow ought to receive.

“Ah, yes, Miss Lawrence,” the languid young man was saying, “you ought to have been there—you really ought, you know. Everybody was there.”

“Do you mean,” asked Mildred with a smile, “that I am nobody.”

“Nobody? I—oh, ha! ha!—certainly not—didn’t mean that at all. Fahncy any one saying that Miss Lawrence was nobody. But it was a first-rate meeting, really; some good hurdle racing, don’t you know. I dare say hurdles are rather alarming when you don’t understand how the thing is done; but oh, I am sure you’d have enjoyed it. Our fellahs do some capital riding, don’t you think?”

At this point the young man turned his eyes towards Baretta, who nodded curtly, and then got up and walked across the room, pretending to examine a minute bit by Wouvermans that hung on the opposite wall. How can she endure such an idiot? was Baretta’s thought. But what can women not endure? Whom can they not like? Confound all women, anyway! he

said to himself angrily. This uncharitable sentiment was strengthened when he discovered that one of two persons whom he had seen indistinctly when he came in was Miss Tredwell. She had been talking with a tall girl in black, and when he turned she smiled and nodded. Why should she give herself that trouble? he wondered. Of course she hated him; of that he was very sure. And he felt that she somehow stood between him and Miss Lawrence, and so he hated her. But after she had recognized him thus cordially he could do no less than go over and speak to her.

"I can't say you are a great stranger, can I?" said Daisy, still smiling. "I suppose I ought to say it's an unexpected pleasure."

"Don't feel obliged to compliment me," said the young man, brusquely. "I ain't—I'm not used to it."

"But one gets used to so many things, Baron—even to a title. Oh, Miss Prime, do you know Baron Smolzow?"

The tall girl remarked that she hadn't that pleasure, and made some perfunctory observation regarding the state of the weather, to which Baretta paid little heed. He was wondering what in the world Miss Tredwell meant by sneering at his title; he was sure that it was a sneer. She had made him feel very uncomfortable by what she had said at Mrs. Chilton's. To begin again in this way was like a challenge. Well, she should find him a formidable enemy. He did not intend that his career should be wrecked by anything that a foolish young woman could say or do. Nevertheless, it was annoying to find that Miss Lawrence's own intimate friend suspected him.

"You—you don't seem to be fond of titles," he said at last, meeting Miss Tredwell's glance defiantly.

"Oh, I am an American girl—why should I be fond of them?"

"Is that a conundrum? I'm not good at conundrums."

"Indeed!" cried Daisy, with a little shrug.

"Or mysteries either," he added.

"Really! I should have said just the opposite."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Baretta, scowling.

"Perhaps I may be able to tell you when I know myself."

A mocking smile glimmered for an instant about her lips; then

she turned to Miss Prime and said: "You will want to hear some of the Baron's lectures; he's a dreadful Socialist—he wants to murder us all in our beds, or blow us up with dynamite."

"Oh!" cried Miss Prime, with a little shiver of apprehension. "What horrid things you say, Daisy! Of course, Baron, you know I wouldn't believe her."

"Wouldn't you? Well, I guess no one will," said Baretta.

Daisy rose and started to cross the room to where Mildred was sitting. "I wouldn't be too sure of that," she said, looking back at him.

The young man bit his lip savagely, and turned away from Miss Prime with an abruptness that was certainly extremely rude, and which led her to say afterwards that the only remarkable thing about Baron Smolzow was his remarkably bad manners. But Baretta was not in the mood to mind being made the occasion of disparaging epigrams like this. He was furiously angry with Miss Tredwell. What did she know? What could she know? And yet she persisted in talking as if she knew everything and was only waiting an opportunity to expose him. It was something more than mere insolence—the insolence of one who disliked him, who was conspiring with Yates against him. Yates! Well, there was satisfaction in thinking that Yates, at least, was out of the running—that he could not be by to poison Miss Lawrence's mind against a rival whom he had reason to fear.

"Oh do, do get that extraordinary baron of yours out of the way! What a figure he makes with that dreadful coat—and the red necktie!" This was what Daisy was whispering in Mildred's ear while Baretta stood watching them with an angry scowl.

"Daisy! I am ashamed of you," said Mildred. She felt the truth of her friend's words; she had thought that Baretta looked ridiculous in his flamboyant costume when he first came in. But she knew that Daisy disliked him, and as she saw him standing there, alone and obviously in a bad temper, she came to the conclusion that Daisy had been very rude to him, as she could be to those she disliked. "He is at least my guest," said Mildred, with a lofty air; and then she approached him with a

look of more than usual friendliness—a look which at once brought back to his mind all those absurd ambitions he was fond of cherishing.

“I did not see you yesterday, and I—I thought you would not mind if I came to-day,” said Baretta, beginning to forget that she had neglected him on his arrival.

“Yesterday?”

“At Mrs. Chilton’s—I looked in there a few minutes,” explained Baretta, his manner implying that it was a great compliment to Mrs. Chilton. “I hoped you would be there.”

“Thank you—although I’m not vain enough to take your compliment too literally.”

“It wouldn’t be vanity, Miss Lawrence. And I want you to believe everything I say.”

“Everything! Oh you must make half do! you cannot expect more than that. People always exaggerate so much.”

“I don’t exaggerate,” declared Baretta. He wondered what Miss Tredwell had been saying to her—if she, too, were beginning to distrust him. Of course such a suspicion on his part was baseless. Mildred had, indeed, gone very far in taking him at his own valuation, and had resented Daisy’s innuendoes with much warmth on previous occasions. She could not help feeling that he was unused to many things which in her circle of acquaintances were taken for granted; but that was simply his misfortune. His poverty had been a sufficient explanation—or at least it ought to have been; perhaps she was not so very sure that it was. The reality of his title she did not now for a moment question. He had established his claim quite clearly; the proofs were wellnigh incontestable. It was odd, almost inexplicable; nevertheless it was true. The young man whom her father had befriended, whom she had treated with an unacknowledged sense of condescension, was the heir to a title and estates in a foreign land. It was all like a romance—a *fin du siècle Thaddeus of Warsaw*.

“No, don’t think I exaggerate,” repeated Baretta.

“Well, then I won’t, since you are so much in earnest about it.”

“Thank you—oh, thank you! I want you to believe in me.

Every man has enemies—those who won't believe in him, who try to misrepresent what he does, who think all sorts of evil things about him. Don't let them prejudice you."

"I don't understand you, Mr. Baretta—I beg your pardon, but the old name is much—"

"Call me that!" he cried, interrupting her. "What is a trumpery title compared with— But if you believe in me, why, then I can defy them all."

"I—I think you are a little too—sensitive," said Mildred. She was somewhat puzzled by his manner; apprehensive, too, of she knew not what. And yet she did not wish to offend him. "I am sure you have no reason to think me anything but a friend," she added, "and always glad to hear of your success."

"Oh, you will hear of it!" said Baretta, confidently.

CHAPTER XXII

"LA LUTTE POUR LA VIE"

THE little shop where Maud helped to sell newspapers and candy, and footed up the small accounts with the customers in the neighbourhood, was a stuffy place; and she came home one evening not only tired but with a bad headache. It was quite a distance that she had to walk, and through a part of the city which was not pleasant. She too often had to face impertinent stares even in coming along Tremont Street, where the lights burned brilliantly, and she had no reason to fear. But when she turned into the dingy tangle of thoroughfares which led her across the railway bridge and thence to Arragon Street, she could not help feeling nervous. She had been followed by strange men more than once, and sometimes they had spoken to her; and one fellow had even dogged her to her very door, trying to whisper endearing epithets, every one of which was an insult. There was a time when Baretta used to come to the shop to meet her, and then she did not care. But that was long ago—oh, so very long ago! Sometimes Maud repelled unwelcome advances by an angry stare. She could not do as other girls did—"chaff" these men, and give them as good as they sent; and she was trying too hard to be a lady even to notice them. And then at times she would ask herself what was the good of trying to be anything? There was no happiness left for her in life—unless that mad reckless race to death were happiness; a race of bacchantic exultation, of hot riot, with only the misery of the black waters at the end. Oh no! anything—anything would be better than that! Anything but living on forever in Arragon Street, and going back and forth from the stuffy little shop!

Things had been going very badly indeed in the Dolan household. It was a wonder that they still had a roof over their heads. Baretta's departure had made a vast difference to Mrs. Dolan, who had so long been used to counting upon the two dollars which he paid to her every week, that without it she hardly knew how to provide for her large family at all. Two dollars was not such a very great sum, and yet it seemed to make all the difference between comfort and want. So many things could be bought on Saturday evening when one actually had the money in one's pocket. To be sure, the two older boys paid something for their board, and there was Maud's three dollars, which she turned into the common fund, making over her own dresses and only buying a ribbon now and then. But the two dollars!—it was like losing a fortune. Dolan's own contributions had become more and more irregular. The strike at the works had been a long and tedious affair; and of course when a man had nothing to do, how could he go on giving money to his wife? Dolan's way of looking at it was that the butcher and grocer could wait. But it was very little credit that could be got from either, and so when Dolan found that the meals to be obtained at home were scanty he stayed away altogether. He would come home just before midnight, usually very drunk, and tumble into bed with muttered oaths and curses, to sleep until the next noon; and when he awoke it was in a very bad temper indeed, which manifested itself in more oaths and curses and blows for his wife or the children if they came in his way. There was some money every week from the Union, but a poor man out of work had to spend that on himself; his whiskey and his tobacco were the only consolations left to him. It was not so much of a consolation to know that the works remained closed, for there were reasons for believing that the owners could make more money during the dull summer season in this way than if they had a long pay-roll to provide for. Luck kept on talking of their success and how the "scabs" had been frightened away. But some of the strikers had got other jobs, and these insisted that the works could open again any day and find all the help they wanted. Somehow or other these bloody capitalists always managed to get the upperhand. And the last week in August brought

rumours of their starting up once more, coupled with the assurance that none of the strikers would be taken back. "Let 'em try it, that's all!" cried Luck. They did try it; and although for a few days the new men had to go back and forth under police protection, it was not long before everything was running as smoothly as if the strike had never been. But it didn't occur to any of the old men to blame Luck. It was only a part of the general injustice of the world that they could not get their rights.

"I told ye 'twould be that way," said Mrs. Dolan plaintively, one evening, when her husband came home at supper-time. He was in a surly mood, but he had been drinking less than usual, and she realized that the opportunity had come to "have it out" with him.

"Shut up, dom ye," was Dolan's reply. "Phwat the divvle do you know about my business?"

"Shure, I know ye wor a fool to quit work, an' I'm afther thinkin' yez orter go back. There ain't but sivin cints in the house, and where there's ony more to come from is more'n I know."

"Sivin cints be dommed! Has that furriner of yours been round puttin' ijeers in your head? I'd loike to break his dom skull—that's what I'd loike to do!"

"What furriner do ye mane, Peter? There's no furriners here."

"Makin' up to our gyurl and then goin' off without a word! You an' her is fools," said Dolan.

"Oh, is it Mr. Baretta? Who drove him off, tell me that?"

"Well, it's a good riddance he is, an' I'd loike it if he'd taken the gyurl wid him—a dom hussy that's too stuck up for the loikes of us."

"Arrah, Peter Dolan! ye're a hard man on yer own daughter—the poor crayther. Many's the time I've seen her cryin' whin she thought I wa'n't afther lookin'. It was a bad day when he left this house, that it was."

"Go to hell wid ye!" retorted Dolan, cutting off the discussion. "Are ye goin' to fry that liver or ain't ye? I'm dom hungry."

Nevertheless, Mrs. Dolan's words had some effect. Dolan had at first been only too glad to have Baretta out of the house. He wanted to pay him out for the blow he had struck on that evening in the saloon when he had brought the chair down upon Dolan's own head, thereby forestalling the operation of pummelling which Dolan had intended to bestow upon him. At the same time he thought it was more prudent to have the object of his future vengeance elsewhere than under his own roof. Baretta might in that case again forestall him, and this time perhaps with the knife that he had not had a chance to use then. Dolan much preferred to wait for an opportunity to take his foe at a complete disadvantage, when he could make short work of him. That Baretta had abandoned his "gyurl"—that she was crying in secret for him—only added fuel to the flame of his hatred. He himself might call her a hussy; he might swear at her and abuse her; but he was her father, which made all the difference in the world. No other man should make her cry with impunity. She was well rid of such a fellow, but that was no excuse for his leaving her. It was a heavy score which he had to settle with his former lodger. His ideas of Baretta's present occupation were of the vaguest. Luck had told him once that the young man was "up to some new game," and was calling himself Baron Something-or-other; but what this meant he did not precisely understand. "Him a baron!" was his contemptuous reply. It must be something in the confidence line; which showed, of course, what a scamp the fellow was. "An' the impidence of him," cried Dolan, "to lave my gyurl to cry her eyes out for him, the dirty baste!"

It was on the evening when Maud came home from the shop with a bad headache that her father met her in the entry and tried to question her about Baretta. "Where's that dom cuss now?" he asked.

"Who do you mean?" retorted the girl, with a toss of her head. "I wish you'd mind your own business," she added, crossly.

"Look here, don't ye talk loike that to me," said her father, roughly, seizing her by the arm.

"Let me go!" She tried to free herself, but he held her fast.

"I'll let ye go when I dom plase! It's that furrin cuss I mane, that came smoilin' an' shlobberin' round ye, until you couldn't spake a dacent wurrud to yer own father, an' thin wint off wid another gyurl—thot's what he did, an' deny it if ye can."

"I sha'n't deny anything—I've got nothing to say. You're hurting me," said Maud, beginning to sob. "Let me go—my head aches fit to split."

"Hussy!" cried Dolan, accompanying the epithet with a volley of oaths. "Do ye talk loike thot to me?" He grasped her arm more tightly than ever and thrust her against the wall. "Ye dom fool, I'll make ye talk!" he cried.

Maud cowered and shrunk for a moment before this sudden violence, then, in a blind spasm of rage, she lifted her free arm and with all the force she could command slapped her father in the face. The movement took him so entirely by surprise that at first he staggered back; then he seized her again, and with a curse dealt her a blow that sent her headlong to the floor. "Try that again, ye dom hussy!" he shouted.

The girl picked herself up slowly, and faced him once more. "You coward—oh, you coward!" she said. Her eyes were blazing with passion, but her voice was singularly low, her manner almost rigidly calm. "Don't mind, mother," she added, for Mrs. Dolan had come to the head of the stairs, where she stood wailing and wringing her hands. "Don't mind—it's the last time he'll ever strike me." She stood irresolute a moment, then turned and went up-stairs and into her own room, disregarding her mother's sobs and entreaties, and, indeed, locking the door in her face.

"Oh, Peter, Peter!" wailed Mrs. Dolan.

"Shtop yer whimperin', ye old fool; I didn't mane to hurt her, but she give me a whack first—it shtings loike the divvle," muttered Dolan.

Poor Maud threw herself headlong on the bed and buried her throbbing head in the pillow. This was the crowning indignity—to be struck like that. The coward! the brute! Her own father, but no longer any father to her! "Oh, Frank, if you could see me now!" she moaned. He would pity her—yes, he would do that. He had never loved her; he had thrown her

over heartlessly enough when his fortune came ; but still he had always been kind. She had come away from that final interview full of all the bitterness of renunciation. She had even tried to be angry with him, to dismiss him from her thoughts ; but no such easy relief from her misery was possible. She could not forget how much she had cared for him. Although she had understood so clearly that all was over between them, and would have sent him away if he had come, she was tortured for many days with the expectation that he might after all refuse to give her up. He must have understood that it wellnigh broke her heart to say good-bye to him. But there had only been a long silence ; and now that the worst had come she had not a single friend in the world to whom to turn. She could no longer stay at home ; her father should never have the opportunity to strike her again. Home ! was it home at all ?—this place where a drunken brute abused wife and children, and left them to shift for themselves while he lounged about all day and guzzled in saloons. The dirty loafer ! some one ought to teach him better manners. This was not very nice language for a girl to use, to be sure ; but in moments of excitement Maud was apt to forget her education in the public schools and fall back upon the current coin of Arragon Street. “ Oh, Frank ! I guess you’d feel sorry for me,” she sobbed. He would not know, of course ; he was too happy to think of her, and she would never of her own will see him again. He was a great man now. Doubtless he would marry that girl whom he had really loved all the time, but who never had cared for him. Maud felt that she hated her for her unconscious share in directing her own destiny. She had seen at once that she must give up Baretta, but still with that inconsistency characteristic of her sex she hated Baretta’s future wife.

Maud had little to take away from Arragon Street with her. She had not been able to buy any new clothes for a long time, and she finally decided upon keeping only a single gown in addition to the one she wore. She got up very early in the morning to make her preparations for departure, intending to steal away when all the family were at breakfast. Not a soul should know where she had gone. No one but her mother would care,

anyway, and she felt that she could not at present undergo the ordeal of encountering Mrs. Dolan's screams and reproaches; the habit of "making a scene" was growing upon that well-intentioned but vulgar woman. Maud resolved to write a line to Arragon Street by-and-by to let them know that nothing had happened to her; and, perhaps, if she prospered, she might some day go back and let them see for themselves how advantageous her departure had been. It was a foolish scheme, no doubt, and Maud was foolishly elated by it. She almost forgot the reason for the perilous step she was taking in the delight of anticipated freedom. It would be everything not to have to come home to Arragon Street every evening. She did not even stop to calculate how far her three dollars a week would go in providing her with a decent lodging somewhere else, and plenty of palatable food, and still have something for a new gown now and then. She hummed brief snatches of familiar songs as she gathered her belongings into an awkward parcel, secured with pins in lieu of string. To be free! it meant so much. She went to the head of the stairs and listened intently; and when she heard the clatter of knives and forks below she stole quietly down, with the parcel under one arm, and, closing the front door gently behind her, hurried along the gray street—it was raining and all the neighbours were in-doors—with a guilty expectation that she might yet be followed and compelled to return.

She went first to the little shop, and it was not until she had been there half an hour that she realized how necessary it was that she should find work somewhere else. This aspect of the case struck a sudden chill to her heart. Would she, then, have to abandon her purpose altogether? Oh no; that was something which she could not do! She would rather beg—she would rather starve—than live under her father's roof any more. All her courage, all her cheerfulness, deserted her. She sat down behind the counter and cried; her sense of desolation seemed to be supreme. And then she recalled the fact that she had eaten no breakfast, and that she had no money to buy any. She dried her eyes hastily, and went up to the woman who kept the shop.

"Can I have my money to-day?" she asked.

"To-day? To-day is Friday," said the woman, counting over the cash in the drawer before her.

"Yes, I know," answered Maud, "but I need it very much, and as to-morrow is Saturday—"

"And Saturday is pay-day. You forgot, didn't you?" added her employer, with a disagreeable laugh. "What brings you round so early? Dust them shelves, as long as you're here."

Maud forced back the angry retort which rose to her lips. But when the woman went into the room behind to eat her own breakfast, and some one came in to buy a paper and offered a dollar-bill in payment, she went to the drawer and took out two dollars and a half, which she slipped into her pocket. "I guess that ain't stealing," she said to herself; "I don't charge her for to-morrow, anyway." She smiled grimly, and putting on her hat and taking up her parcel, went out into the rainy morning once more. She ate something in a dingy restaurant near by, and then spent several dreary hours in trying to find a furnished room. She wanted to be far enough away so that she would run little risk of meeting those who knew her, and she walked almost to Roxbury before she began to make any inquiries. She found herself at last in a quarter mainly given over to cheap tenements, and here she thought that she might find something within reach of her slender means. But her experiences were very discouraging. The untidy women to whom she preferred her request were naturally suspicious of a young person with a single parcel. Even the wretched plight she was in—she had been walking through the rain without an umbrella—could not disguise the fact that she was good-looking, which added to their suspicions. "We don't let no rooms here," was the usually surly response. But she would not abandon the search; she would not go back to Arragon Street. She found her way at last to a dingy grocer's shop, where she bought some sweet biscuit, for she was beginning to feel hungry again, and asked the man behind the counter if he knew of any respectable lodgings in the neighbourhood. He hesitated a moment and scratched his head reflectively.

"Oh, well," he said at last, dubiously. "I guess Mrs. Jack-

son, at Number 'Twenty, might take you in. I heard her say yesterday she'd got a room she didn't exactly need for her folks. It's the fourth house on this side."

Maud thanked him and went to find Mrs. Jackson—a slatternly woman in a faded and greasy wrapper, who opened the door just far enough to allow her to put her head out, while she listened with an indifferent air to Maud's story.

"I expect to have some work in a few days," said Maud, "but I want a quiet place to stay in, and the grocer just below said you might have a room for me."

"Oh, the grocer said that, did he?" replied Mrs. Jackson, ungraciously. "Well, I'll just thank him to mind his own business."

"Then I guess I needn't trouble you," said Maud, with an angry flush, turning to go down the steps again.

"Hold on!" cried the woman, opening the door a few inches farther. "I hain't said I wouldn't take you, have I? It's a small room—perhaps it wouldn't suit you. Where did you come from, anyway?" she asked, abruptly.

Maud tried in vain to speak; there was a sudden choking sensation in her throat which she could not overcome. It was such a wretched plight to be in—she was so tired, so hungry, so wet, so thoroughly miserable. She stood looking blankly at her questioner for a moment; then sank half-fainting to the step and burst into tears.

"Lor' sakes!" cried Mrs. Jackson, throwing the door wide open. She was a soft-hearted person, in spite of her belligerent manner, and this unspoken appeal for sympathy touched her. "You jest come in an' git dry, anyway," she said, stooping down and half dragging the girl over the threshold. "There's a fire in the kitchen; come in here." She led the way through a dark and narrow entry into a small and not over-clean room, which contained a rusty range, on which a teakettle hummed and a stewpan gave forth odours of boiling onions; a sink, piled high with dirty dishes, two chairs without backs, and a wooden table grimy with the marks of immemorial dinners. "You set down," said Mrs. Jackson, pointing to one of the chairs.

"You'll think I'm a fool!" exclaimed Maud, at last, trying to stifle her sobs. "I guess the walking and the rain was too much for me. I'll tell you how it was," she said, sitting up and looking at Mrs. Jackson almost defiantly. "I ran away from home. My father beat me, and I wouldn't stand it. I can get work enough, and I'll pay you a week in advance now, but I won't go back there again."

"It'll be a dollar, then. What's your name?"

"Maud."

"Maud?—Maud what?"

"Vivian." She gave the first name which occurred to her. It was a name which had pleased her in a novel she had read only the day before. Gladys Vivian was the heroine, and she had married Lord Harold Beaumont, the younger son of the Earl of Mount Avon. Maud Vivian was not likely to marry anybody, but it was a lovely name.

"Maud Vivian—sounds like one o' them stage names," was Mrs. Jackson's comment. "That ain't my affair, though. I guess you're a decent girl; if you ain't you don't stay, that's all. You better see your room, an' put on some other clo'es, an' let me hang these down here to dry off. Another thing—you'll have to pay in advance—you know you said you would," added Mrs. Jackson, hurriedly. "You see, of course, a poor woman like me—"

"It's quite right," interrupted Maud, pulling the money from her pocket. "I might forget and spend it; I ain't used to having so much." She laughed rather bitterly as she followed her new landlady up-stairs.

But if Maud had thought that her troubles were over she was soon convinced of her mistake. She spent several dreary days in trying to find employment. In most cases she was dismissed with a curt refusal. Sometimes the explanation was vouchsafed that no more help was needed just at present, but that in a couple of months or so, when the holiday trade set in, there might possibly be a chance for her. A couple of months! and meanwhile how was she to live on nothing? On the morning of the fourth day she had just ten cents left. She had eaten very frugally, in spite of a healthy appetite, but somehow or

other her money had dwindled away, and now she had but ten cents, and this she spent on her way down-town for a cup of coffee and a sandwich. She vaguely wondered as she ate where her next meal would come from. There was no one to whom she could go. She had few acquaintances among the girls who lived in the neighbourhood of Arragon Street. She had always rather despised them, and they in turn had stigmatized her as "a stuck-up thing." The girl whom she had known best, and whom she had really been fond of, had disappeared from home two years ago. Nothing was now definitely known of her whereabouts, but it was understood that she had "gone to the bad;" such disappearances were not uncommon. Poor Jenny! she wasn't a bad sort, Maud had often said. She was thinking of Jenny now as she walked down Washington Street in the warm, bright September morning. Was she still alive and still in the city? she wondered. And then Maud remembered how once she had asked Baretta why she herself should be any better than the rest? Jenny at least must have plenty to eat, whatever else she had lost. Oh no! the sacrifice was too great; she would resist that temptation, no matter what happened. It made her sick with loathing to think of the lives which girls like that must lead. And yet how was one who could get no work to live? She had no better success this morning than before; it was the same answer everywhere. She wandered about until long past noon, when she grew too faint and tired to wander farther. How hungry she was! and yet she had no money, and no prospect of any. She tramped wearily, through Temple Place to the Common, where she flung herself down upon one of the benches in a mood of utter despair. What was to become of her now? Perhaps Mrs. Jackson might give her some dinner; the woman was kind-hearted in spite of her repellent manner. But she could not ask that, because if she did the whole truth would come out, and then at the end of the week she would be homeless as well as hungry. Oh, it was hard—it was very hard! The tears came to her eyes as she sat there.

Presently she rose, holding to the bench for a moment to steady herself—the intensity of her hunger made her dizzy—and looking vaguely about her, as if some modern miracle might

be performed to release her from her anxieties. And perhaps it was a kind of miracle that a woman passing by should stop, with a curious look of inquiry, of uncertainty, and then suddenly step forward and take her by the arm. "I guess you're sick, ain't you?" the woman said.

"Thank you—I can get on all right," replied Maud. The voice seemed familiar to her, but she did not look up. She had been pitying herself intensely, but somehow she instantly resented pity from another.

"You don't know me, do you? Well, I don't blame you," continued the woman with a harsh laugh, dropping her arm.

"Jenny!" cried Maud, lifting her eyes and recognizing the girl of whom she had been thinking only a little time before.

"Oh, you do know me!" said Jenny, laughing again. "I'll go, I guess, before you take that back."

"No—don't go," said Maud, faintly, as Jenny turned her back, "I—I never said any harm of you—I never thought you meant it—" and here she sank upon the bench again and began to cry.

"Here, now, you come along with me!" Jenny spoke roughly, but there was no unkindness in her voice or manner as she took Maud by the arm and led her along the Mall. She thought she knew what that crying meant. So poor Maud, who had thought herself so fine, had made a slip, too! Jenny's mouth curled sarcastically. It seemed very dreadful now to the girl, but she would soon get used to it, as she herself had done. The times were few when Jenny allowed herself to experience any feelings of regret; at those times she was sure to get into a maudlin state, the result of gin rather than of tears, which in sober moments she saw to be very silly. A girl in her business needed to have all her wits about her.

"Where are you going?" asked Maud, at last.

"To dinner, and you're to have a bite with me."

"Oh, but I can't—I'm not hungry, really—I have something to do—"

"Look here, Maudie!" interrupted Jenny, brusquely, "I know I ain't the kind of a girl you want to be seen with—yet. But you're the first one of the whole lot that's spoke to me decent,

and I'm going to look out for you—damned if I ain't. There—I didn't mean to swear, but it comes natural nowadays," she added, with a grim smile. "And I guess you can't fool me by telling me you ain't hungry. So come along!"

And Maud could resist no longer. All power of resistance seemed to be taken from her by that deadly faintness; she walked blindly on, hardly conscious of any volition in the matter. "I guess we might as well have a good lay-out," Jenny was saying. "I'm pretty flush to-day, and I'm hungry myself." They had crossed Tremont Street, and were now making their way along a narrow alley that led from Temple Place to Winter Street. After passing by a gorgeous bar-room they came to a door marked "Ladies' Entrance," which Jenny pushed open with a familiar air. A flight of stairs led to the floor above.

"Look here!" said a waiter as they reached the landing, facing them as if to prevent them from advancing farther.

"Don't you be so fresh!" retorted Jenny, sharply. "Me and my lady friend want some dinner. That's straight." She laughed, and brushing by him entered a small room at the right where a table was set for two. "It ain't any of your business," she added, turning defiantly to the waiter, who had followed them.

It was like a dream to Maud; and she half-expected to awake from it and find herself hungry and miserable again. She had a guilty feeling that she ought not to be here—that association with a girl like Jenny was degrading; perhaps once she, too, would have passed her by with a shrug and a sneer. But a few kind words were too much for any pride she might have cherished upon this point. And everything tasted so good! She did not know what she was eating; she still felt dazed, half between sleeping and waking; but it tasted good. The wine which Jenny ordered, too—Maud had never drunk wine before, and she could not classify it more specifically—somehow warmed and cheered her, although she sipped it reluctantly and really did not like it at all. To be eating dinner here with Jenny, a girl who had gone to the bad! She could not understand it at all; nor could she afterwards understand how it was she was led to tell Jenny her story. Jenny cried a little—perhaps she

had been drinking rather more than was good for her—and swore several times with a good deal of vehemence. Then she tried to make Maud take some money, which Maud persistently refused to do.

"I guess you think 'twas got in a bad way," said Jenny, at last. "Well, I'm bad and you ain't," she went on, sobbing again. "Don't you give in—no, never, so long as you live. Do you think I don't know how different it is? Who cares for me?" cried Jenny, with another oath. "What'll become of me?—tell me that. Why, I ain't good enough for you to take my money—am I, Maudie? Don't touch me; it might spoil you." She rang the bell, and then filled her glass again and drained it at a single gulp. "Gimme a piece of paper and a pencil," she said to the waiter. "Come, freshy, don't stand staring at me. Don't you know a real lady when you see one? You're too damn fresh, you are. I want to give you my address, Maudie. I don't live there, but they'll always know where I am. Oh, of course I ain't fit to be seen talkin' with you now, but the time may come—I hope it won't! I hope it won't!" And she began to cry again.

This outburst rather frightened Maud, and it also had the effect of making her realize her position. That she should have been eating dinner with Jenny! a girl to whom no decent person would speak! It was a humiliating thought, and Maud flushed scarlet as she fell back towards the door, where she stood looking uneasily at her companion.

"Go, go!" screamed Jenny. "I don't want to see you again. What are you staring at me for?"

"Oh, Jenny!" cried Maud, not wishing to part in anger from one who had, after all, been kind to her. But Jenny would pay no attention, and, after a moment of hesitation, Maud went down the stairs to the street alone, feeling very miserable indeed. "To come to that!" she said to herself after a time. The dinner which she had eaten seemed somehow to choke her. Oh, better to be hungry, to be homeless, to endure anything rather than come to that! thought Maud, with a sob.

She went back to the Common and wandered aimlessly about for a time. Then she heard the clock on Park Street Church

strike three, and awoke with a start to the fact that the day was passing, and that she was in reality no better off now than she had been in the morning. She turned in the direction of Washington Street once more, and after a few more fruitless inquiries at the smaller shops, went in a desperate mood to the one large dry-goods establishment which she had left untried. She asked with a listless air for the manager, and was hustled by a surging crowd from one man to another, until at last, in one corner of the vast building, some one came out from behind a railing and began to question her.

"Come round at eight to-morrow morning—eight sharp, mind—and try it," said this man in a peremptory tone, and with a suddenness that wellnigh took her breath away. "It isn't often we give a girl such a chance as that, but you"—he gave her a rather insolent leer as he spoke—"you'll do pretty well, I guess. Four dollars a week—beginning to-morrow morning."

"Four dollars!" said Maud. It was better than starvation, but it seemed so little when one had no home to go to. "I suppose," she added, timidly, "that if I do well—"

"Four dollars a week as long as you stay—or we keep you. If that don't suit you"—here he leered at her again—"you'll have to find some friend."

"Some friend?" repeated Maud. "What do you mean by that?"

The man laughed. "As pretty a girl as you ought to know what I mean," he said, as he turned on his heel and walked away.

CHAPTER XXIII

BARONIAL HOSPITALITY

"You shall leaf it all to me: I know—I know!" said the Baron Smolzew's confidential adviser, authoritatively. "Your frents come to see you—they will find you a great man. *Eh, bien!* It ees so you shall receif them. Haf you not reason to trust me? to do what I tell you? I haf made you Baron Smolzew, and I am notings. Ees that not true?"

"Well, you have reminded me of it often enough," retorted Baretta, ungraciously. "But see here, I don't think you ought to be around when they come. People are so curious—they ask so many questions."

"Ho, ho!" laughed his father. "You veesh to hide me away—you veesh dem not to spik with me."

"There's no good in running any risk," said the young man, scowling. "I've never thought much of your appearing in the matter at all."

"And vare would you haf been? It vas der old frent of your fader who brought you papers—who told you he vas tedt, and you were his son. His old frent, zat you are helping from the gootness of your heart, *nicht wahr?*"

"Well, well!" said Baretta, impatiently. "There's no good in going into all that again. Of course you will do as you like—as you think best. Only it's as much for your advantage as for mine that no one should even suspect—"

"*Jawohl!*," interrupted the older man calmly, "it ees to my advantage. I understand. And I vill do as I like; oh, yes, I vill do as I like." He hovered about the door a moment with a bland but suggestive smile; then he went out, closing it softly behind him.

"Confound him!" muttered Baretta. His impotence was very galling. He felt that he no longer had the direction of his own career. When he had made that compact with his father he had sold himself into perpetual slavery. The kingdoms of the world were his, but he had bent the knee to Satan. A man cannot always get on without making sacrifices which cost as much as the prize is worth. There were times when Baron Smolzow was inclined to recall with envy Francis Baretta, who had lived in a mean little room in Arragon Street. The Baron had some very handsome apartments. They were quite as good as those of Yates's, which had once aroused in him feelings of bitter envy; and they were in a more fashionable neighbourhood. Even Manchester Square was not a suitable place for a man of his rank and prospective wealth. His private secretary, his confidential adviser, who had been the means of enabling him to substantiate his claim, had at once advised the change. The good Herr Emil, who was as deeply attached to Francis Baretta as he had been to Paul, had argued with much force that if he wanted people to accept him as a baron he must live like one; and he had answered the young man's objections on the ground of expense by saying that he himself would look out for that. Of course there was great force in this reasoning, but, after all, one must have money. Baretta was doing very well just now with his lectures and his newspaper work. But money goes rapidly when one has a private secretary whose physician insists upon his drinking whiskey, and who smokes countless cigars and is inclined to be fastidious about his diet. It was exasperating to have to supply such luxuries, but, under the circumstances, remonstrance was both useless and impolitic. How, then, with this drain upon his resources, could Baretta afford to abandon his room in Manchester Square for a suite in Huntington Avenue? "You vill haf the money—some day," said the pertinacious Herr Emil.

The new rooms—there was a study and a bedroom, with a bath-room between—were furnished very comfortably indeed, and all through the indefatigable exertions of Herr Emil; nothing, in his opinion, was too good for the heir of the noble house of Smolzow. Herr Emil, in a new suit of black, was a very re-

spectable looking person indeed, and he had the most insinuating manners. Thanks to the newspapers he was almost as well known as the Baron himself. His career had been a strange and interesting one. Like the cousin of the late Baron, he had fled from his native land in 1848 because of complicity in the Kossuth rebellion. He was of humble extraction himself, but he had known Paul Baretta; he had, in fact, crossed the Atlantic in the same ship, and had been a loyal friend to the unhappy nobleman in all his subsequent career, which had not been fortunate. Penniless and unknown, what could a refugee expect? The struggle of life in a foreign country had been too much for Paul Baretta. He had given music lessons for a time—he was a fine performer on the violin; but even this resource failed him at last, and after that there was only want and misery. But he managed to live somehow, always attended by the faithful Emil, until the Civil War broke out, when he hastened to offer his services to the country which had done so little for him. He was a brave soldier, and he fell at Antietam, desperately wounded. Emil had nursed him back to life, but his constitution was shattered, and he was never the same man again. He fell in love, however, with a poor American girl in New York—or perhaps she fell in love with him; at all events, they were married, and presently a son was born to them. Two years after Paul Baretta died, and within six months his wife followed him to the grave. He had left mother and child to Emil's care, and had also confided to him the papers which disclosed his identity, the photographs of himself and his family, the marriage certificate, the proofs of the birth of his son. He had separated himself entirely from his native land, but he had wished this son to know his history, to be able, in the future, to claim the privileges of his rank. Herr Emil had endeavoured to be faithful to his trust; he had cared for the heir of the house of Smolzow; he had taken Baretta's name, and taught the child to call him father, thinking it best to conceal from him for a time the secret of his birth. But one day, alas! the little Francis strayed away, and no amount of search availed to discover him. Herr Emil had been frantic with grief, but presently he was forced to conclude that Francis was dead. And then,

years after, this story of the young man who thought he must be the son of Paul Baretta had come out in the papers. It was all very wonderful, but the evidence was complete. All that Francis had to do was to account for the interval between his disappearance when he was ten years old and his reappearance at twelve as a friendless youth seeking employment. The explanation was that he had not been lost, as the good Herr Emil had fancied, but that he had run away, fired with a boyish love of adventure; and when, afterwards, he came to realize his folly, it was too late to mend it. As to the identity of the young man of twenty-five with the boy of ten, Herr Emil had his photograph, taken at the age of nine, in which the resemblance was quite obvious. There might be some missing links which the legal mind, which is always hard to convince, would insist on recovering; but no fair-minded man, surely, would question that Francis Baretta was the son of Paul Baretta, and therefore now Baron Smolzow. Herr Emil had made it all very clear, and consequently Herr Emil was something of a personage in his way, too. His coming forward to devote himself to the son of his old friend and master was a touching proof of his fidelity. He had a lively recollection of the glories of the Smolzows and the splendours of their ancestral estates at Bataszek. And it would all be so soon the possession of this young man! No wonder that tradesmen smilingly furnished the supplies necessary for the maintenance of baronial state and did not press for the payment of their bills. Herr Emil always dressed in black, as we have said, and was a most respectable-looking man. Besides, the Baron was received everywhere—in the very best homes in the city. It was worth while to have such a customer.

Baretta had to admit that his father's assistance had been invaluable, although he did so with a very bad grace. It was not agreeable to discover that there was another person in the world almost as clever as one's self. Perhaps from a strictly intellectual point of view his father was not clever at all; he could not have delivered lectures on Socialism, nor would he ever have been admitted to the best houses. But his powers of imagination and invention were very great, and it is doubtful if his son

would have got on very well at this period of his career without him. As a confidential adviser Herr Emil was unsurpassable. Such is the ingratitude of the human heart, however, that his presence annoyed and vexed the Baron extremely, who was impatient of authority, as an ardent Socialist ought to be. Everything, Herr Emil thought, must be left to him; and although the young man might resent his interference, he inevitably submitted in the end. What else, indeed, was there for him to do? It was not once only that his father had told him he would do as he liked. Quarrelling was useless; besides, his father was too obstinate even to quarrel. Sometimes when he was alone Baretta would break forth in wild fits of anger, cursing the folly that had led him to barter his independence even for the sake of making good his new pretensions. But it was too late now for repentance; that he realized fully. Perhaps, after all, he would not have repented in any case, although it was a kind of gratification to his conscience to think so.

However, the satisfaction of having handsomely furnished rooms and of getting one's acquaintances to come there to drink tea was something which could not be taken from him, and which was in a way infinitely consoling. Mrs. Tom Gregorson had suggested the idea to the young man. Mrs. Tom had rather made fun of him when he was presented to her at Mrs. Cadwallader's; she had even pretended not to know who Mrs. Chilton was—Mrs. Laura Hastings Chilton, Baretta had said, impressively. But he had interested her, and taking him up—which was the phrase she used—promised to give her a new sensation; and she liked in any case to be gracious to the lion of the hour. Society bored Mrs. Tom; it had so little variety, it was so commonplace. And the proofs that Baretta was Baron Smolzow were so substantial that there seemed to be no possibility of making a mistake in encouraging him.

"Would you come?" asked Baretta, when she first suggested that he ought to ask his friends to those charming rooms of his—of course they must be charming, for every one knew what good taste he had.

"Oh, that is quite another matter," said Mrs. Tom, smiling. "It would depend upon whom else you asked."

"I would leave that to you," he said.

"You want too much ; I couldn't think of it."

"But you will come? I shall be doing it for your sake."

"You are a very audacious young man," said Mrs. Tom. "I don't think I ought to promise you anything. One has to be very careful about the people one meets."

"Of course, if you think my friends are not good enough—"

"Oh, you are delightfully rude!" she cried. But in the end she promised to come, and Baretta went away, not knowing whether to feel angry or gratified. He thought it was she who had been rude.

He was decidedly ill at ease when the afternoon arrived. What his father might do was a source of no little anxiety to him. He knew that his father's help had been useful to him, but he did not want him in the way when Mrs. Gregorson came. There was never any telling what he might say or do. Baretta felt that the worst thing which could happen to him was to be made ridiculous ; he took himself very seriously, and he wanted others to do the same. It was useless, however, to make suggestions ; his father invariably ignored them. Fortunately, on this occasion, the respectable Herr Emil saw that it was his duty to remain in the background. His role was that of the humble retainer of the noble house of Smolzow. When the first of the Baron's guests appeared Herr Emil withdrew deferentially to the inner room, appearing now and then on the threshold with an apologetic cough and a look of inquiry at his young master. Nothing could have been more impressive—more in keeping with the traditions of a great family.

"Your secretary is a most remarkable man," observed Mr. Orrin Fox Allen, who was among the early comers. Mr. Allen had once told Yates that the Baron was a cad, but nevertheless he felt immensely interested in him. "I can't help thinking how odd it is," he added, "that he should have found you out after all these years."

"Odd!" exclaimed Baretta. "What should there be odd about it? Every one read the story in the newspapers."

"Ah, I dare say. Still, it was a coincidence, you know. Miss Lawrence looks charming this afternoon, doesn't she? I must

ask her to give me a cup of tea, by-and-by. It's very strange, but that man's face seems somehow familiar to me—your secretary's, I mean."

"I don't know where you could have seen him," said Baretta, scowling. For the first time the dread of possible discovery chilled him to the heart. Of course there was a resemblance; he had traced his own features in his father's on the evening of their first meeting. What a fool he was to run any risks! After Mr. Allen left him, to speak to some one else, he moved towards the doorway, where his father was still standing. "You must be careful," he said.

"Careful? For vat?"

"They will see who you are—they will think we look alike."

"Pouf! vat a coward you are!" muttered. Herr Emil. "I shall do vat I bleese," he added.

Baretta could not say more then and there, although he ground his teeth in helpless rage. What was the good of making the struggle, only to be defeated at last by such folly as this? He turned to meet Mrs. Gregorson, who had just made her appearance, with a rather forced smile. Mrs. Gregorson had nodded to Miss Lawrence at the tea-table, and to one or two others whom she knew, and now stood in the centre of the room with a look of bland expectancy.

"This is indeed an honour," said the young man, bowing. He felt very nervous, now that this great lady was actually his guest, and he pulled forward a chair with an air of perturbation which the accident of stumbling over a rug did not diminish.

"Who are all these people? Do I know them?" asked Mrs. Gregorson, putting up her lorgnette as she sank back among the cushions. "Oh, there is Mr. Allen. How do you do, Mr. Allen?" she added, as that gentleman drifted in her direction. "Isn't it charming of the Baron to ask us all? Do you really know any one here?" As she asked this question she let her voice sink to a whisper.

"Oh, one or two of them," said Mr. Allen, with a laugh. This part of the conversation did not reach Baretta's ears, but he was quick to suspect that they were talking of him. He felt humiliated and insulted, but he did not know how to resent their con-

duct. So he remained standing near Mrs. Gregorson's chair, casting uneasy glances at his other guests, who had separated into groups of twos or threes, and who had apparently quite forgotten his existence.

"Is that Mrs. Chilton?" continued Mrs. Gregorson. "Oh, she is matronizing the affair—or chaperoning—which is the word those dreadful society papers use? How disappointing! She doesn't look at all like a woman who writes poetry."

"How should people who write poetry look? You know I'm guilty of that."

"Oh, well, with a man it's different. They say the Baron is greatly interested in Miss Lawrence. It looks that way, doesn't it, when she pours tea for him? I don't remember the pretty girl with her. Oh, for Heaven's sake, Mr. Allen, here's that tiresome Mrs. Stanwood coming. Don't deliver me up a prey to her; she would really talk one to death."

Baretta, finding that Mrs. Gregorson was so interested in her conversation with Mr. Allen that she turned her back to him, went over to the table where Miss Lawrence was sitting. The pretty girl with her was Annie Linley, a younger sister of the learned Georgiana—just "out," and with no ambition beyond securing plenty of masculine attention. "I don't think it's much of a success," he said, gloomily. "You're kind to stand by me, anyway."

"Not when Mrs. Tom has come?" asked Annie, with a pert little grimace.

"Well, she's interested in Mr. Allen more than any one else," said Baretta, bluntly.

"Oh, I don't think you quite understand," said Mildred, gently, meaning to soften his wounded pride, and yet fearing to offend him. "One always neglects some one unintentionally where there are so many. Won't you take a cup of tea to her?" added Mildred, looking up at him and smiling.

"Oh yes," he said. Then he suddenly bent forward and murmured in her ear, "You are always kind; I thank you—you shall not find me ungrateful."

"You make too much of it," said Mildred, more gravely. She

was a little vexed by this demonstration; it looked so absurd that he should assume before a whole room full of people that he had something to say to her alone.

"The Baron is coming to Cambridge next week," said Annie Linley, as he took the cup and moved away. "Mamma is interested in that stuff about the rights of the poor, but I think it's perfectly silly, don't you?"

"No, it isn't silly," said Mildred. "One ought to have more sympathy with poor people and make their lives easier. That is what papa is always saying."

"Oh, your father! Every one knows how much good he does. But getting the poor to kill the rich is quite another thing, I should say."

"Whatever put that into your head? Does Baron Smolzow look as if he wished to kill anybody?"

"Well, I don't know what they want, and I don't care much," said Annie. "Georgy can tell you more about such things. There she is, laying down the law to the Baron now. Goodness gracious! here are four men all at once. Oh, Mr. Cadwallader," she said, shaking her head playfully, "I can't let you have any tea unless you promise to be good."

Baretta was not so much interested, however, in the conversation of Annie's sister as to be oblivious of what was going on around him; and when he saw Mrs. Gregorson rise from her chair, he excused himself and hastened to intercept her. "I—I want you to meet Mrs. Chilton," he said.

"How rude you have been!" said Mrs. Gregorson. "How you have neglected me!"

"But, really—" he began, taken aback by this salutation.

"Oh, don't think I blame you," she interrupted, thinking what a very stupid young man he was; an impossible person, even for a baron, she said afterwards. "You know what Hamlet said to his mother when he was lying at Ophelia's feet. Mrs. Chilton? I have never had the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Chilton." The two ladies bowed, each rather distantly, and Mrs. Gregorson added, "I have often heard Baron Smolzow speak of you."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Chilton, coldly. She thought that Mrs.

Gregorson intended the remark to be disagreeable—to imply that her literary reputation was unworthy the attention of so exalted a person.

Baretta did not understand the meaning of Mrs. Chilton's "Indeed!" and thought she was rather ungracious; but as Mr. Cadwallader came up at this moment nothing further was said. Mr. Cadwallader was glad to find some one he knew as well as he did Mrs. Gregorson. An afternoon tea was not exactly his *métier*, and the irrelevant chatter going on all about him bored him extremely. He would not have come at all had it not been for his wife, who was not going herself, and who said that the family ought to be represented. "I don't think I take very much to Mr. Yates's friend," Mrs. Cadwallader had said; "but one of us ought to go." Thus it will be seen that she had put upon Philip the responsibility of introducing Baretta, after all. She asked her husband that evening if Mr. Yates had been at the Baron's, and expressed surprise to find that he had not. It did not occur to her, of course, that he would stay away on Mildred Lawrence's account; that was an old story now, and people were near forgetting it entirely. Baretta himself, however, was not likely to forget it. He had asked Yates to come, not because he enjoyed his society in these days, but because he wished him to be a witness of his triumph. No one else, he thought, would realize quite so keenly how great that triumph was. But he had stayed away, and Baretta's expectations in this respect were unfulfilled. He thought it was extremely disagreeable of Yates, who ought to be ashamed to show his jealousy so plainly. What would he say now, to see Miss Lawrence in his successful rival's rooms, pouring tea while he entertained his friends? Baretta glanced at her from time to time with a swelling sense that she was becoming connected with his fortunes, at least in the minds of others, however unconscious she might be of the relation herself. He was thinking of this when he sat down by her side after Mrs. Gregorson had made a triumphal exit—he himself had seen her to her carriage, the door of which his respectable secretary in black had opened with a very low bow—and asked her to fill his cup once more. "I am living on my nerves just now," he said.

"But that is a very bad way to live," answered Mildred. "I shall have to turn lecturer now."

"I wish you would, Miss Lawrence. Nothing would be more delightful."

"Oh, you would change your mind about that," she said, coolly. "But you shall have your tea just the same, if you won't let me give you chocolate instead. Do you know," she added, "I think you ought to congratulate yourself. It has been most charming; Mrs. Gregorson kindly gave me that piece of information."

"Mrs. Gregorson!" repeated Baretta. "I care much more for what you think."

"Then you are not as wise a person as I took you to be. But don't say such things, please."

Baretta stirred his tea in silence for a moment. Then, without looking up, he said: "I'm sorry my friend Yates didn't come. I wanted you to meet him." Mildred gave him a quick glance, but made no reply. "He's a good sort of fellow. You don't know him, do you? I thought you didn't when your father was speaking about him the other day."

The girl coloured angrily. This was intentional impertinence on his part, she thought; it was not the first time he had talked of Mr. Yates in her presence, as if he were curious to know what she would say about him. And yet she could not resent it; she could not assume that he knew anything whatever of their past relations. "One always knows every one else here in Boston," Mildred said at last, with an air that was unconsciously haughty; "one is a cousin or something of the sort to half of them."

"I see," he retorted, with a short laugh; "that shuts me out." He felt that he was taking a course which would injure him in her eyes, but his anger at her repulse made him reckless. Confound the pride, the narrow intolerance, of these people! he said to himself. Was Baron Smolzow a person to be snubbed even by the daughter of Sibley Lawrence?

"You purposely misunderstand me," said Mildred, in a gentler tone. She, too, felt that her patience was being rather severely tried, but she would not quarrel with him—she who was

his guest. "Isn't it getting late? Some of them are going. And you must not neglect any one else for me. Miss Annie and I," she said, smiling faintly, "are useful and not ornamental persons this afternoon, you know."

But Baretta came back afterwards as she and Mrs. Chilton were standing together, waiting to bring up the rear of the line of departing guests. "I am going to take Mrs. Chilton home with me," said Mildred, as if she must explain why she lingered. "Don't trouble yourself to go down with us. Oh, I assure you we have enjoyed coming so much."

Of course he insisted that he would go down. And he called to Herr Emil to find out if Miss Lawrence's carriage were at the door. He felt that he had behaved very badly, and he endeavoured to atone for it. "You are very kind, Miss Lawrence," he said, "but you always were that."

"I don't see how," answered Mildred. It was not an especially significant remark, but her eyes met his with a friendly look—a look that set his heart to beating loudly, that sent the hot blood to his face.

"Then," he said, in so low a tone that Mrs. Chilton could not hear, "you will forgive me?"

"Forgive you? I have nothing to forgive." But when he put out his hand impulsively she extended hers to meet it, and he remembered how once she had not shaken hands with him at all.

It was while she and Mrs. Chilton were coming down the steps, and Herr Emil was holding open the door of the carriage, as he had done earlier in the afternoon for Mrs. Gregorson, that a young woman coming along the pavement suddenly stopped to look at them. Neither of the ladies saw her, but Baretta, who was following them, did; and he started back with a sudden look of terror and a muttered execration.

"If you please," said Herr Emil, with a profound bow, suddenly addressing Miss Lawrence, and stepping forward so quickly that if she had turned she would have noticed nothing unusual. "So!" he cried, closing the carriage door sharply as soon as she and Mrs. Chilton were inside, and pressing very close to the window. "Retty, coachman."

But Baretta, with eyes as of one gazing at a spectre, was still standing at the foot of the steps. It was the young woman who held his attention, not the departing carriage. "Maud!" he cried at last, and anger and fear were strangely mingled in his tone—"Maud! what brings you here?"

CHAPTER XXIV

"YOU HAVE MADE ME WHAT I AM"

"I GUESS I've as good a right as anybody to walk along the street," said Maud, sullenly, in answer to this question. She had turned very pale when she saw him first. But womanlike, she had looked away at once to scan the faces of the two who were coming down the steps with him; and when she had discovered that one was young and pretty and "real stylish"—perhaps she noted this last fact first—it was upon this one that she had bent a curious and intent gaze, until the gray-bearded man who was holding open the carriage door had stepped between. Then when she heard the rumble of departing wheels she turned to Baretta again. "I didn't come to see you, anyway," she said, finding that he made no reply to her first retort.

"*Bitte, Fräulein,*" said the man whom she did not know, laying a hand upon her arm as she attempted to walk by. "Vill you not come in? to talk it ofer—*nicht so?*"

"Who are you, anyway?" cried Maud, shaking herself free, "and what have you got to talk to me about?"

"You know der Herr Baron, eh? He vas your frent? But it is kolt in der shtreet," added Herr Emil, smiling blandly.

"Come, don't let's have any nonsense," interrupted Baretta. "I beg your pardon, Maud—I didn't expect to see you—I thought perhaps—"

"You thought perhaps you were rid of me for good and all," cried Maud, bitterly. "Well, you will be soon."

The crafty Herr Emil took in the situation at a glance. Ah, it was sad, very sad, that a young man should betray and abandon a girl like that—so handsome a girl, too! But Baron Smol-

zow mustn't get into a wretched wrangle with her on the street. "*Mein schönes Fräulein,*" said Herr Emil, taking her by the arm once more, "*es ist sehr kolt—ach, Gott!* you will haf your death."

And like one in a dream Maud yielded to him and allowed herself to be led inside. It was true, as she had told Baretta, that mere chance was responsible for this meeting. She had made no effort to seek him out, even when matters were at the worst with her. She had accepted their parting as something inevitable; she was trying to forget him, trying to persuade herself that indifference if not oblivion was possible. And now she had found out her mistake. All the dreary weeks and months between had been swept away by a huge tide of emotion. She had answered him defiantly, although she could have cried half in joy, half in anguish, at seeing him once more. But it was true that she had not sought him out—that she was even now wishing their first parting had been their last.

"*Ach, das arme Mädchen!*" cried Herr Emil, when they were in the Baron's rooms and he had closed the door. "It ees shameful," he said. "Dese young men haf badt hearts."

"You shut up!" said Baretta, savagely. "How dare you talk that way? I never injured this young woman, if that is what you mean. We were engaged—in a kind of fashion," he went on, hesitating over this declaration and looking at Maud, who kept her eyes fixed on the ground and said nothing. "Why don't you tell him the truth?" he cried at last, "that you broke it off yourself?"

"Yes—I broke it off myself; I guess that's right." Maud laughed bitterly. "What do you want of me?" she asked, turning to Herr Emil.

"*Moi!*" he cried. "I vant notings. I haf been told to shut up—told by him to shut up. *Gott im Himmel!* vare would he be now midout me? Novare—no baron at all. And I haf been told to shut up."

"Look here!" broke in Baretta, excitedly, "there's no use in having a row. I didn't mean to insult you. But when you began to talk as if I had been to blame—"

"No, he ain't to blame," said Maud. "You couldn't expect

a great man like him to go about with the likes of me. Who are you, anyway?" she asked, suspiciously.

"Oh, it ees no mataire; I am of no account whatefer. But I tell you one tings," Herr Emil went on, addressing the Baron, "I safed you from der oder seeing notings. *Ça ne fait rien*, you say. You are not grateful—*das weiss ich wohl*. Die leddies saw notings."

It was quite true what his father said; Baretta remembered now how adroitly he had hurried Miss Lawrence and Mrs. Chilton into the carriage, how he had prevented Maud from making any disturbance before them even if she had wished to do so. He himself would not have thought of that. Indeed, the unexpected meeting had quite deprived him of his presence of mind.

"Oh, well, I thank you—I know how much I owe you," said Baretta. "I guess you won't let me forget it in a hurry. But I should like to have a few words with this young lady alone, if it's all the same to you."

Herr Emil held up both hands and shook his head despondently. "*Ach, der Jugend!*" he exclaimed.

"Well, I'm going!" exclaimed Maud. "I don't see why I should stay, or what you can have to say to me, Frank. I've got to be back at the store before six. They don't often let me out like this—they sent me up this way with some laces to match for one of their swell customers. I guess her house would just about suit you, Frank. You'll excuse a poor girl's calling you that, won't you? I can't remember your new name."

"Why are you still so angry with me, Maud? You would never give me a chance to explain—you went away so quickly—"

"And I wasn't worth bothering about after that, was I? Oh no!" she added, hastily. "I ain't mad with you. How could I expect anything else? I didn't want you to come. I didn't want to see you at all." Her colour rose as she spoke, and Baretta, looking at her, thought that she was handsomer than ever. "And I ain't going to stay here any longer."

But Baretta intercepted her as she hurried towards the door. "You must stay a minute—you must listen to me," he cried. "Why can't you leave us to ourselves?" he added, irritably, glanc-

cing at his father, who had been a silent spectator of this scene, and who now, with an expressive shrug, turned and walked slowly into the next room. "Maud, please be reasonable—please give me a chance to explain."

His hand was upon her arm, but she threw it off angrily. "How dare you touch me? How dare you try to keep me?" she cried, her voice growing harsh and shrill. "Haven't you hurt me enough already? O God!" cried poor Maud, suddenly bursting into tears, "how can I bear it? how can I bear it?"

"Maud! dearest Maud!" Baretta, too, was completely un-hinged by this tempest of passion. The old love, that he had thought dead and buried, seemed suddenly to awake again; for the moment his whole nature was swayed by an impulse to go back to her, to give up everything for her sake. How true it was that no one would ever love him as she did. And she was so very pretty even in her wrath—even with the hot tears coursing down her face. Miss Lawrence, if she were also shabbily clad, would look pale and inconspicuous beside Maud—Miss Lawrence, who, though she had taken his hand at parting, did not love him. "Oh, you are unjust to me," he went on; "I have never forgotten you, though I have tried to. Maud, dearest Maud! No, don't turn from me; I have been a fool, but I won't give you up now." He seized her arm again and drew her, still struggling, closer to him. "Maud! we won't be separated again, not if you yet care for me."

"Care for you!" cried Maud. "Oh, Frank, Frank!" She threw herself passionately upon his breast, trembling like a leaf; as their lips met her eyes closed, and she sank heavily backwards in a dead faint.

"You should leaf everytings to me," said Herr Emil, while he and Baretta bent over the unconscious girl, one bathing her forehead with cold water, the other holding a bottle of camphor to her lips. "Vat for you kees her?"

"Oh, you have been spying, have you?" cried Baretta, furiously.

"Spy! I haf to spy. You could not be the Herr Baron one single day ven I not look after you. Haf you no sense? Haf you forget the *schönes Fräulein* you are to marry? Oh, ho! I

know sometings! it ees fool zhoke to look at me so. You sall marry her—I vill see to it—*moi!*”

“Well, it’s no time to talk of that now,” said Baretta, sullenly. “You had better go; she won’t care to see you here when she comes to herself.”

“Oh, I leaf her to you. But no more keesing—*eh, bien?*” Herr Emil laughed knowingly. “I haf to go out—you shall haf *das Mädchen* to take home. Ho! ho! but no more keesing!” Herr Emil’s face was distorted by a smile that was perfectly malignant in its suggestion of evil. “If it ees money she vants, I vill feex it—*ach, ja!* I vill feex it.”

Baretta drew a sigh of relief when the older man closed the door behind him. It was as much as he could do to keep from bursting forth into an angry retort; the suggestion had been so inexpressibly vile and cowardly. He experienced an absolute sense of loathing for his father. Poor Maud! that any one should think for a moment he was coward enough to take advantage of her helplessness. This young man had his faults; but whatever they were, he would have been incapable of that. To do him justice he had never thought of anything but marrying the girl when he told her that they should not be separated again. He had not realized how much the fulfilment of this renewal of his vows to Maud would cost him until his father had reminded him. Oh yes, he said to himself bitterly, he had forgotten that he wanted to marry Miss Lawrence. But what was the use of remembering now? Why had Maud come into his life again to turn its current all awry? Her dark eyes, once more opening as the colour surged back to her face, were fixed upon him with a vaguely pit-eous look, but half unconsciously he avoided meeting them.

“You will not leave me, will you, Frank?” she murmured, presently.

“Leave you, Maud? No, no!”

“I suppose I’m a big fool. But I can’t help it.” As she spoke a tear slowly trickled down her cheek.

“Look here, dear, you mustn’t talk just yet.”

“Mustn’t I?” she asked, smiling faintly. “How good you are to me!”

“Good! It’s you that’s good, Maud, to come back to me.”

And perhaps after all, he thought, this solution of the problem of life was best. What advantage had his ambitions been to him? These people who courted and flattered him did not care for him in the least. If they knew the truth they would only despise and deride him. Maud was the one human being on earth whom nothing could estrange. If he could only forget Miss Lawrence, who would so easily forget him, he might find with Maud at least a measure of happiness. He could not question the sincerity of her devotion; it flattered him now to think that she loved him no less than ever, although she had every reason to think that he no longer loved her. And why should he not marry her? His hopes of winning that other were very shadowy and unsubstantial. Her kindness might have meant nothing. But Maud loved him, and she would not care whether he was Baron Smolzow or only Francis Baretta. If the time ever came when he could go across the ocean to claim those estates he might as well take her as any one else. Over there it would make no difference. The estates! he was sick of all this pretence. He would rid himself of his father's presence and go back to obscurity and be happy in his own way.

"I guess I'm feeling better now," said Maud, presently. She tried to rise from the sofa where she was lying, but he pressed her back with gentle force.

"Wait a little longer," he said. "You don't look quite yourself yet."

"Don't I, Frank? But I am all right—I really am. And, Frank, I didn't mean what I said. I know it's foolish to think that I can ever be anything to you again. Was that her?" she added, after a moment of silence, looking up at him piteously.

"Her!" repeated Baretta, vexed by the question. "What do you mean by her? The ladies you saw were Mrs. Chilton and—and Miss Lawrence. They have been here this afternoon—with other friends of mine."

"Oh!" said Maud. "Well, I don't see that she's so very pretty," she added.

"I wasn't aware that I ever told you she was pretty. But I don't know why you talk in that way. Miss Lawrence is nothing to me—I've told you so any number of times."

"You've told me a good many things. Don't look cross, Frank, but I can't help feeling jealous."

"Oh, you annoy me, you aggravate me!" he cried, impatiently, rising and walking away. "See here," he added, "you must forget all that; you mustn't make yourself miserable over an imaginary rival. I tell you that she is nothing to me—that I love you—that I'll marry you; and why can't you be content?"

"Don't get mad about it, Frank." She sighed faintly; then she sat up, and put one hand to her head. "Oh, what a fright I must be! My hat is all crushed in, and my hair must be a sight. Haven't you got a glass somewhere?"

"You women are always thinking of your looks."

"Well, I ain't got much looks to think of. Oh, I'm a good deal better than I was," said Maud, rising to her feet. "What a fool I was to faint! I guess it was because I was tired. You don't get much chance to rest in the store—they won't let you sit down."

"In the store? What store?"

"You didn't know I was at Brown's, did you? Well, I had to do something, and when I didn't have any home to go to—"

"Have you left your home?" asked Baretta, abruptly. "What did you do that for?"

"Well, I thought after my father called me names and knocked me down it was time to go."

"Knocked you down, the brute!" cried Baretta. "Oh, I've got an account to settle with him!"

"No, Frank," said Maud, coming near, and laying an appealing hand upon his arm. "Promise me you won't ever have anything more to say to him. It ain't worth while—it would only get you into trouble."

"I won't promise anything. It was he who set them all on me—he and that scoundrel Luck."

"But I want you to promise," she persisted. "You might do that much to please me."

"Oh, very well, then; I promise." After all, he thought, would it not be rather beneath the dignity of Baron Smolzew to pursue a quarrel with so low a wretch as Peter Dolan? A low wretch—that indeed he was; and Baron Smolzew was to

marry his daughter. Maud would never understand how great the sacrifice was. And yet once she had said good-bye to him and had gone away without a murmur. Perhaps he was acting like a fool, after all—to throw away all his chances because a girl had cried and had fainted in his arms.

"Do I look all right, Frank?" asked Maud, turning from the mirror and facing him.

"Oh, yes, yes—I suppose so," he answered. "Where do you live now?"

"In Roxbury. But you needn't bother to come with me. I've got to go back to the store first. Mercy!" she cried, looking at the clock, "it's after six now, and it'll be closed. Won't I get it in the morning!"

"Well, you can tell them the truth—that you were sick. Look here, Maud, I don't like the idea of your working in such a place as that. It's wearing you out. Besides, it isn't a fit place for any girl. I know how they treat them—the damned canting humbugs! who brag about their kindness to the poor."

"That's all very fine, but I don't see how I can live on air. You needn't come with me, Frank, unless you want to. I guess I can find my way."

"Of course I'm coming." He disappeared into the inner room, and returned in a moment with his hat and coat. "I don't know how we'll manage it," he said, "but we'll have to manage it some way."

"Manage what? Oh, you needn't worry about me; I can take care of myself," said Maud, bravely. Did he understand, she wondered, how hard her task had been? how she had counted every penny, and denied herself every pleasure, to live honestly on four dollars a week? And now there was to be an end of that. She felt a guilty pleasure in the thought. He was throwing away everything for her; but although she had been capable of giving him up once, the second temptation was too strong. How she had misjudged him! If she had had a little patience, they need not have been separated at all. "I ain't sure that you mean what you say, Frank," she said, smiling at him that he might know she was only joking.

"How pretty you look!" was Baretta's rather irrelevant reply.

“Maud, I do love you, even if—” He hesitated a moment; then he took her in his arms and kissed her with fervour. Possibly he felt the need of convincing himself as well as her.

He was very far from convinced, at all events, as he rode back from Roxbury in the street-car alone. It was a great sacrifice that he was making, and he was not at all sure that it was inevitable. What a fool a man will sometimes make of himself for a pretty face! Maud was undoubtedly pretty now. The confinement for so many weary hours in the big store might have robbed her of her old look of abounding health, but it had somehow added a touch of refinement—had made her look more like a lady. That neat black gown, too, was infinitely more becoming than the gaudier costumes in which she had been wont to array herself. Nevertheless, no one could deny that it was a great sacrifice; and it irritated him that the opportunity for making it had arisen. When she had cried in that way, what was a man to do? Of course he had missed her; even to a man who is getting on in the world the thought that he has no one to love must bring a pang; one's self is an unsubstantial idol. And yet if she had not cried and thrown herself upon his breast and kissed him he might have borne another parting from her. He could explain things better, could set them in their proper light, when she listened quietly, as she had done on that afternoon when he told her he was Baron Smolzow. After all, it was incongruous—it was absurd—that they should marry. His father's insidious suggestion occurred to him, but he thrust it aside impatiently. He would not have her ruin on his conscience; he had enough to trouble him already. Although this young man had certainly not been over-scrupulous in most things during his career, he had his standard of honour. There were some sins which he could not commit.

He dined at a French *table d'hôte*, so that it was nearly nine o'clock before he got back to his rooms, where he found his father reading the evening paper. He glared angrily at the complacent figure lolling in an easy-chair. Herr Emil had a pipe in his mouth, and there was a bottle of whiskey and a soda-siphon on a convenient table.

"I wish you wouldn't drink so much," was his surly greeting. "Oh, ho!" cried Herr Emil, looking up. "So we haf been mit our scharmer, eh? My troat is bad to-night—der viskey is what I needs."

"I wish I'd never seen your face!" Baretta burst forth. "I wish you'd go away and never come back to trouble me again!"

"You are a tam ungrateful son," replied Herr Emil, coolly.

"What good has it all been? What am I now but an impostor—a fellow that not one of them would speak to if they knew the truth? And they will find it out—that fellow Allen saw you this afternoon, and trust him for talking."

"I tink you are upset, François, by our leetle girl—vat you call her—Maudt? She is a bretty girl, but not so bretty as Miss Lawrence. You haf been gone mit her a long time."

"Well, that's none of your business." Baretta threw off his coat and hat, and sank wearily into a chair. He felt baffled and helpless. Rage as he might against his father, he could not stir him a jot.

Herr Emil helped himself to another glass of whiskey-and-soda, although a certain thickness in his speech indicated that he had already taken quite enough. "You are tam ungrateful," he repeated. "I do everytings for you, and you treat me like a tog. But I forgeef you," said Herr Emil, sniffing with his emotion. "I do everytings for you still. I haf made you vat you are."

His son looked at him in silence for a moment. He was wondering if there was really any way of escape, after all, from the net in which he was entangled. "Yes," he said at last, sullenly, "you have made me what I am."

CHAPTER XXV

AN EMISSARY

WAS she, then, to be happy in spite of everything? This was the question which Maud asked herself that evening as she sat alone in her dingy and desolate little room. It was not a happy life that she had been leading of late. There was no pleasure for her, none of the joys which belong to youth; only a dreary round of daily work, a dull recurrence of a never-ending task. Yet it was a life from which she had seen no hope of escape, no promise of deliverance. Marriage was something that seemed to her to be no longer even a possibility. In giving up Baretta she had given up her whole future. Whatever happened she could never forget that she had loved him. It was useless for her to try to forget. There are women who can be faithful to an ideal long after it has crumbled away. Maud's environment was not exactly calculated to develop delicacy of feeling, but nevertheless this quality of fidelity was hers. Sometimes, it is true, she reflected that Baretta had treated her very badly; but he never was discharged from the tribunal of her memory without a verdict of forgiveness. And now—and now! He had told her that nothing should separate them again. How could she maintain even a semblance of anger when he said that? Was he not giving up everything for her sake? Perhaps she ought to refuse to accept the sacrifice; perhaps she ought to send him back to Miss Lawrence. Would he ever have been hers again except for the strange chance of the afternoon? It was Miss Lawrence of whom he was thinking, to whom he was devoting himself, when she came along the pavement. Maud knew who the younger of the two ladies was

before she asked him. Miss Lawrence ought to look like that—dainty, trim, with that air of high breeding which is none the less obvious for being indefinable, which even a girl brought up in Arragon Street could not fail to recognize. And to give up a real lady just for her! That was the very climax of heroism in Maud's mind. She could not bear to tell him that he must not make the sacrifice. Once she had been generous with him; but she had suffered too much since to be generous now. "Oh, I will be so good to you, Frank!" said Maud, talking to herself, as people who live much alone are wont to do. "I guess you'll be sorry some day, but I can't help it if you are."

Indeed, just at this time Maud would have grasped at almost any way of escape from the life she was leading. She had begun to think that it was even worse than being in Arragon Street. To be shut up night after night in a mean and stuffy box of a place, with not a soul to speak to! The only resource she had was reading, and one could not forever fall back on that. Even the marriage of Gladys Vivian to the son of the Earl of Mount Avon could not console Maud Vivian for lodging with Mrs. Jackson. She had kept the name she had so hastily assumed partly because she wished to avoid a stringent catechism from the worthy landlady, whom she felt always kept a suspicious eye upon her actions. Mrs. Jackson was poor, and she wore very dirty dresses; but she was rigidly virtuous. On the rare occasions when Maud had extended interviews with her she invariably emphasized her determination to have nothing to do with a girl who was not "decent." Mrs. Jackson had young children, and her determination was no doubt a worthy one. Perhaps it was also on Mr. Jackson's account that she insisted so strenuously upon this point. Mr. Jackson looked much younger than his wife, and his ideas of virtue were considerably more vague. He was a very facetious person, which was trying to his wife, who had a slender sense of humour. One reason why Maud kept so much by herself was Mr. Jackson's propensity to make eyes at her—a propensity which Mrs. Jackson detected and resented. He used to annoy her by furtively squeezing her hand or slipping his arm about her waist when he met her alone in the dark and narrow entry. Once he went so far as to try to kiss her, and when she

indignantly told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself, he burst into a laugh and accused her of being afraid of the old woman. It was not at all pleasant to be treated like this, and so Maud stayed alone more and more in her cheerless room at the top of the house. She often wished that she could escape as easily from other unwelcome attentions. But in the store she was a prisoner behind the long counter, and when the manager sat down on one of the stools in front and leered at her with a satyr-like grin there was no way of escape. The other girls used to laugh and tell her that she had a great "mash" on Foxy, such being the epithet which they applied to Mr. Thomas B. Fox. But she retorted that she didn't want to have a mash on anybody. The girls would not believe that; all of them had some mash of their own; and it appeared that Foxy had "made up to" them all in turn.

"He ain't so bad as young Mr. Brown, though," said a short, curly-haired, impertinent-looking girl named Dolly. "Him you saw me talking to yesterday—one of the firm," she added.

"Well, I guess Dolly knows how bad *he* is!" exclaimed Clara, who was Dolly's chum. It was just after eight o'clock in the morning, when customers were few, and the young women were chattering in a group at one end of the counter.

"You mean thing!" cried Dolly. But she did not look very greatly displeased.

"Perhaps he knows something about them diamonds we saw her wearing the other evening at the theatre," said a third girl, who had a coarse face and a disagreeable laugh.

"Well, that ain't any of your business," retorted Dolly.

"I guess the diamonds was Rhine-stones," observed Clara.

"Oh, I know what's the trouble with you; you're jealous," said Dolly, with a laugh. "Don't you ever mind what she says to you," she added, turning to Maud. "But you're one of the quiet kind and don't let on, anyway."

"Let on!" repeated Maud, sharply. "What is there to let on about?"

"You're too innocent by half!" sneered Clara. She afterwards told Dolly, however, that she thought that Vivian girl was really pretty straight. "I guess she don't know yet how

hard it is to keep straight," Clara said. "What's the good? I'm going to have my fun while I can, you bet."

Dolly laughed once more, although for a moment there was something suspiciously like tears in her eyes. Perhaps she was thinking of the time when she had no diamonds to wear, but when her heart was lighter than it often was now.

Maud could not be very friendly with these girls. Conversation like this filled her with a sense of loathing; she felt ashamed for all women that any of them should lead vicious lives. Possibly she did not quite realize the strength of the temptation to which they had succumbed. In spite of her pride in her good looks, her hatred of the sordid conditions with which she had hitherto been environed, her desire to be loved and her capacity for a passionate devotion, she had a strong instinct of purity, a disdain of contamination, which were more powerful incentives to virtue than any conventional "goodness" could have been. She might fall for love in the hour of her weakness; she would never sell herself for diamonds. And yet she knew that in this painful struggle for existence youth and beauty must soon wear away. All the girls were not like Dolly and Clara. Many a drama of patient heroism had been played in that huge, noisy, crowded human hive. One could read the final act in the pale, patient, careworn faces. And there were other girls who had been prosperous, whose cleverness had been recognized in a substantial way, who could say that their good-fortune had been honestly come by. But at best it was a hard life, and Maud was not patient. The confinement, the din, the unkindness of floor-walkers, and the impertinence of customers—all fretted her. When she was alone in that dingy room at Mrs. Jackson's she shed many a tear. And she had nothing to console her—no, nothing. Even the man she loved had forgotten her.

But now what a change was this! She had seen him by a strange chance, and although she had tried to repulse him, he had told her that they should never be separated again. He loved her still—he would give up everything for her sake. How she had misjudged him! She tried to persuade herself that she had misjudged him, that he had not treated her badly when he had told her how greatly his circumstances had altered. And

yet, perhaps, she was not quite convinced. She had known all along that he did not love her as she loved him. He might yet be sorry that he had come back to her. It must be that the other girl was fond of him, too; at any rate, she no longer looked down on him, since she came to see him in her carriage and with her coachman and all. Maud was conscious of a bitter sense of inferiority as she recalled how the two ladies had come down the steps with that strange man bowing and scraping before them. Who was he? Evidently a person of some importance, and yet Frank had never spoken of him. It was all very puzzling. She could hardly believe that the great happiness she had thought was gone forever was still to be hers. Such things happened in stories but not in real life. Why should Frank give up his swells just for her sake? She did not doubt that he could marry Miss Lawrence now if he wished. She didn't understand exactly how it was, but he had become a swell himself, and could marry any one he chose. And he would choose her. How could she help being grateful to him for that? Surely, he had not meant to be hard and cruel when he told her that hereafter he must associate with people of his own class. At all events, she could no longer cherish any resentment against him. He had promised to take her away from the surroundings which she so hated. And whether it was too great a sacrifice on his part or not, she could not give him up a second time. She had suffered so much in the past that her present happiness made her selfish. To get away from the store, from the customers who spoke sharply to her, and the girls who made fun of her—she would do anything for that. Yet somehow it was impossible to free herself from the apprehension that it was all a mistake—that he would come by-and-by to tell her she must give him up. And then, oh, then! what would she do? How could she bear once more the hopeless life she had been living after a single rapturous glimpse of the way to escape? It was drearier out here in a shabby tenement in Roxbury than it had been even in Arragon Street. But she would never go back; whatever happened, she would not do that. She often wondered how they were getting on at home, and if they missed her. A few days after her sudden departure she had sent to her mother a

postal-card saying that she was well, and telling her not to worry. But she had given no address, so that none of the family could seek her out. She now resolved that when she was married she would go to see them and let them know how well she was getting on. Perhaps they would think that she had gone to the bad, which was the usual destination of girls who left Aragon Street suddenly. It did not occur to her that she was doing them any injury by keeping them in suspense. Her mother would "take on," to be sure; but she was always taking on about something or other.

And, indeed, Peter Dolan had undergone more than one bad quarter of an hour since Maud's departure. He did not, as a rule, pay much attention to his wife's grumblings; an oath or a blow usually put an end to them. But even he cowered a little under the repeated accusation that he had driven his own daughter out into the streets.

"Maud was niver a bad gyurl," Mrs. Dolan would say, sobbing. "She had her notions, but she wasn't a bad gyurl. An' it was yerself, Peter Dolan, that druv her away from her home."

"Dom you and your whimperin'!" Dolan burst out on one occasion. "Is a man niver to have any pace at all for the likes o' ye?"

"Arrah! it's no pace I have thinkin' of her," cried poor Mrs. Dolan.

"I didn't mane to drive her away," said Dolan, sulkily. "If she hadn't give me her impertinence—dom the furriners who put all sorts of ijees in a dacent gyurl's head."

"She was that proud, Maud was," Mrs. Dolan said.

Her husband rose from his chair with a curse. "You'd be afther drivin' a saint crazy," he said, putting on his hat. "Isn't it bad enough for a man to be out of wurruk widout you rowing all the time?"

"Wurruk is it? an' perhaps ye're lukin' for wurruk now?"

"Shut yer mouth an' be dommed to you!" was Dolan's amiable reply as he left her.

This was in the autumn, after Maud had been gone some weeks, and the head of the family was still trying to exist without earning any regular wages. How he got the money to buy

so much whiskey was a mystery which Mrs. Dolan could not fathom. He slouched away now in the direction of Eliot Street. This was one of the nights when the club met, and he was sure of a comfortable shelter for as long as he chose to stay, even although he had only money enough in his pocket for a single glass. He counted on borrowing tobacco to fill his pipe; no one could refuse that request, even although he always borrowed and never lent. He had begun to think that in other respects the club wasn't much good. Those fellows were always talking about dividing up the wealth of the men who lived in Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue, but here he was still out of work and with no prospect of getting any. He wouldn't have minded that so much if the money had come without working, which was what he thought Ditton and the rest intended to bring about.

The room was not more than half full when Dolan got there. He shuffled along to one of the obscurest tables, feeling half ashamed to be seen when he had so little to spend, and remembering how long it was since he had dropped even a penny in the hat which was passed around at each meeting. Only a few of the men were as shabby as himself. Most of those who were concerned in the strike of last summer at the works had found other jobs by this time; some of them came no longer to the meetings, perhaps because Socialism was less attractive when they were earning good pay. There was no speaking going on just yet, although Ditton and Luck were both present, talking earnestly together at the opposite end of the room. Luck had been away for several weeks, conducting a strike at Worcester, which was now settled by the action of the manufacturers in granting the advance demanded by their men; a result which gave the agitator an increased air of importance, and also led him to sport a very flashy diamond in his brilliant purple and scarlet necktie. Dolan watched him with an angry feeling that something must be wrong when one man could be so prosperous and another so hard up. Where did he come in, anyway? he asked himself. "Gimme a whiskey—a good stiff un," he said, beckoning to a waiter, and putting down his sole remaining dime.

It was while he was drinking this that Luck came over to

his corner and sat down beside him. "Well, Dolan," he asked, cheerfully, "how are you getting on?"

"Oh, I'm a regerler Jay Gould, I am!" said Dolan, sarcastically. "I'm a gintleman of laysure, livin' on me money."

"You hain't found another job, then?"

"No, I hain't, an' be dommed to you!" Dolan growled, setting down his empty glass.

"What are you blaming me for?" demanded Luck. "Come, now, have another glass with me. I want to talk with you."

"Talk away, then," said the other, but not quite so gruffly. The prospect of more whiskey was distinctly mollifying.

"It wa'n't my fault the strike didn't succeed. But never mind that, now. I've got another job for you."

"Who said I was afther wantin' a job?"

"Well, I guess you'll want this," said Luck, with a rather vindictive laugh. "Have you seen Baretta lately?"

"Baretta? No, dom him, an' if I do, I'll punch his bloody head!"

"That's the way to talk—the damned sneak! Oh, I ain't through with him yet; I'll teach him to call me a scoundrel. See here, Dolan," Luck went on, leaning forward, and speaking in a lower tone, "you don't like the fellow any better than I do."

Dolan's reply was a volley of oaths and curses. "Loike him, is it?" he sputtered at last. "Whin he tuk my gyurl away from me, and her a dacent gyurl!" Dolan cried.

"Oh, he did that, did he? And he hit you over the head, too—don't you remember? What would you say to a chance to pay him out?"

More oaths and curses followed this question.

"Let's have another drink," said Luck, an evil smile playing for a moment about his lips. "I guess you'll like the job I've got for you."

"Is it murther ye mane?" asked Dolan, sinking his voice to a whisper.

"Oh, don't you get scared, Dolan; it's nothing that can bring you into any trouble. It's only to find out a few things I want to know. But I ain't sure you can do it," he added, dubiously.

"You've got to keep a level head on you—no getting drunk or street rows, or anything of that sort."

"Dhrunk? I can kape as sober as ony man whin I loike—I'd have ye know that."

"Well, perhaps you can. Anyway, I think you're the man I want. Now, see here, Dolan," Luck said, taking a bank-note from his pocket; "there's five dollars. It's yours if you do what I tell you and keep your mouth shut."

"Foive dollars!" cried Dolan, putting out an eager hand for the money. It was a long time since he had owned five dollars.

"Hush, you fool! I don't want these fellows to hear. And mind—not a word to Ditton."

"Thrust me," said Dolan, pocketing the money. "Have a whiskey wid me."

"No, no—keep your money. Besides, you've got to keep sober if you're going to help me. It's just like this," Luck said, bending over the table again after a cautious glance about the room; "that cuss is playing some game, though I don't know what it is. I don't believe your girl's with him; but that's neither here nor there. Baron Something-or-other he calls himself. But you and me know better 'n that, I guess."

"The dom furriner!" growled Dolan.

"He's in with all the nobs, anyhow; I seen him coming out of a house over on Beacon Street yesterday. What's his game? That's the thing. Who says he's a baron. I read a lot of stuff in the papers about his castle at some jaw-breaking place over on the other side; but that was a plant—any damn fool could see as much. What's he after among the swells—the dirty scoundrel? And him calling me a scoundrel—me! I'll bet I'm as honest a man as him."

"How do I be afther knowin'?" asked Dolan. "What is it I can do? I s'pose ye want me to stip up and ring the dure-bells and tell them he's a dom loafer."

"Don't talk like a fool, Dolan!" said Luck, sharply. "I tell you it's a plant, and I want to find out what. I don't care whether the nobs let him in the front door or the back; that's their lookout. But I'm going to pay him out for what he said to me, don't you forget it."

"Oh, bother yer payin' him out. Tell me what ye're after wantin' me to do to him?"

"I don't want you to do nothing to him. I want you to watch him."

"Watch him, is it? Sure, that would be aisy done, if I knew where he was."

"I can tell you that. I've got the number here," said Luck, producing a rather greasy piece of pasteboard. "It's a girl I know got his card from the tray in the hall. He comes hanging round her young missus—that's what he does, the bloody beast! I saw him coming out of the house, and I buzzed her about it."

"Ye're a rale gaynius, Luck!" exclaimed Dolan, admiringly, as he examined the card. "And so yer gyurl give yer this, did she? The durrtty furriner!" added Dolan, referring to the Baron Smolzow, and not to Luck's friend in the servants' hall.

"She is only a lady friend of mine," said Luck, anxious to correct any misapprehension as to his relations with that young woman. "I have a good many lady friends," he added, adjusting his diamond in his necktie by an imaginary looking-glass, while a condescending smile was visible for a moment on his red and puffy face.

"An' phwat am I to do when I find the place?" Dolan asked, being more interested in the object of his mission than in Luck's lady friends.

"Do! why, watch him, of course, that's all. Just keep out of the way, but watch him. You needn't hang round all day, of course, but have an eye on him. See? And find out who the other foreigner is that's hanging around. I bet they've got an eye on somebody's silver—and him to call me a scoundrel!"

"Another furriner? how them dom cusses hang together!"

"Well, don't you get into any row with them—see? It would spoil the game. I don't know as you're the right man, anyway, but I guess you hate him about as bad as I do, and that's something. I would be mighty careful in the daytime; he might spot you. The old chap looks foxy—knows more than the young one, I bet. Hang round there evenings—that's the best plan. And when you bring me some news I'll give you some more money."

"A mon can't live foriver on foive dollars," grumbled Dolan.

"Well, if you're smart you won't need to. Look in Thursday night and let me know. Hold on, though, meet me on the corner of Tremont and Boylston streets at eight. That's better—we mustn't be seen together too much. There's Ditton looking at us now. And keep straight, or it will be worse for you—see?" added Luck, in a bullying manner, as he rose from the table and walked away.

Dolan was inclined to resent the tone of this last piece of advice, but he remembered the five dollars in his pocket, and came to the conclusion that nothing would be gained by yielding to this impulse. He ordered another glass of whiskey, and flung down the note in a lordly way before the astonished waiter, who took it with an unfounded suspicion that it must be counterfeit. Dolan's ideas of what he was to do were still very vague, and he thought that more whiskey might perhaps clarify them. He did not pay much attention to Ditton's talk that evening, or to Luck's boastful account of the successful strike at Worcester. He was thinking of his revenge upon that "dom furriner." He would have some sort of revenge, after he had found out what Luck wanted to know. He walked home rather unsteadily that night—the whiskey had not had a clarifying effect, after all—but when he awoke the next morning he surprised his wife by giving her a dollar and telling her he had got a job. When she asked him if they had taken him back at the works he roughly advised her not to be a fool; nor would he enlighten her in any way as to the nature of his employment. It seemed a good deal like a fool's-errand to go and hang about the house where Baretta lived. He kept it up two days, and only had the satisfaction of seeing the man whom Luck had called the other foreigner go in and out several times. But on the third day, shambling along just after dark on the opposite side of the street, he saw the door open and two persons come out. One was Baretta. He did not need to look twice to recognize him. But who was the woman? Dolan crossed the street stealthily and followed them a few steps. When they came to a corner they stood waiting for a street-car, and as the woman turned to speak to her companion the gaslight fell full upon

her face. Maud! no one else but Maud. Dolan fell back with a smothered curse, clinching his fist. It was true that the young man had taken away his girl, that she was living with him here. Dolan was not a tender father; he himself had driven away his daughter from her home. But this confirmation of the worst that could happen stirred in him a fury of remorseful wrath that might have vented itself then and there had not the street-car come along just at the moment. "The dom villain!" muttered Dolan, staggering back with a despairing groan. Then he hurried after the car and swung himself upon the front platform, turning up his coat-collar so that he could not easily be recognized, although in the darkness there was not much danger of that. "The dom villain!" repeated Dolan. There would be news enough to tell Luck to-night.

CHAPTER XXVI

"HOW CAN SHE ENDURE HIM?"

YATES heard of the success of Baron Smolzew's "afternoon" from one of the Baron's guests. He had not once thought of going himself. His distrust of the Baron was something which he could not overcome. He tried to argue himself into feeling that it was unfounded, as indeed it appeared to be. But instinct in this case was stronger than reason. However badly he had been brought up, the heir of a noble house would at least have been a gentleman. Perhaps Philip did not scrutinize his motives for holding this view any too closely; few of us do when our motives are not unimpeachable. He would have resented the imputation that he was envious of Baretta's success. At the same time that curious sense of rivalry continued to possess him—a rivalry that was hopeless, since he himself was a failure. He had given up his literary ambitions just as he had given up all hope of a reconciliation with Miss Lawrence. But his annoyance was intense whenever he heard her name coupled with Baretta's, as it had been several times of late. Why should she throw herself away upon such a fellow as that? What were her friends thinking of that they permitted it? He could not have thought of such a thing with patience even if he had believed in Baretta's honesty, as he had done before this preposterous claim to a title had been advanced; although, of course, if there had been no title in question, no one else would have thought of it.

Mr. Allen gave him an account of the Baron's social triumph. He was not at all anxious to listen, but Mr. Allen kept on with amiable persistence, and would not be shaken off. The author

of *Round the Zodiac in Rhyme* seldom came to the Pilgrim; he preferred, as a rule, the companionship of the gentler sex. He found women more appreciative, more sympathetic, than men, and this in spite of the fact that he had lately taken to impeaching their manners in the *Northern Review*. He liked to talk of literature and art, on which occasions the fellows at the club were apt to guy him. But he had some of the weaknesses of humanity after all, and a love of gossip was one of them.

"You ought to have been at our friend the Baron's yesterday," said Mr. Allen, coming up behind Philip as he stood at one of the long windows in the front of the club-house gazing indifferently across the Common. "It would have amused you immensely."

"I wish you wouldn't imply that he is *my* friend," said Philip, rather sharply.

"Oh, have you washed your hands of him? Well, I dare say that's the wise thing to do. Still, you know, Mrs. Gregorson has taken him up. She was there—in her most patronizing mood."

"I don't go in for that sort of thing very much."

"Well, I fancied you might make an exception in this case, because you are interested in him. But, of course, if you are no longer on good terms with him—"

"See here, Allen," said Philip, "I can't understand why every one is forever throwing the fellow in my face." He was thinking of Mrs. Cadwallader as he spoke; but Mr. Allen did not know this, and so he concluded that something had put Yates in a deuce of a temper. "Good heavens!" Philip went on, "what do I know of him more than any of the rest of you? It's true that I got acquainted with him some time ago, and that he interested me at first; and I dare say I may have asked him here to dinner once or twice. But I have nothing to do with this baron business; I wouldn't even pretend to give an opinion about it."

"Oh, I understand that, Yates; I quite appreciate your position. But then, you know, people will insist on putting the responsibility upon somebody."

"Well, let them choose some one else. Mind you, I wouldn't say a word against him or his claims; I don't really know more

about either than you do. What folly it is to drag me into it, anyway! He has enough influential friends now—let them decide for themselves.”

“Ah, that is all very well,” said Mr. Allen, “but we know what these people are. I dare say he’s Baron Smolzew fast enough; that was a mighty clever story in the papers. And yet I’d be willing to bet that there’s something behind we don’t understand. At all events, if I were Sibley Lawrence I wouldn’t let my daughter—”

“We won’t discuss Mr. Lawrence’s affairs, if you please,” interrupted Philip, curtly.

“You seem to be in a devil of a temper, Yates. What has put you out so much? Of course, as you say, these people can mix themselves up with the fellow’s affairs all they please; it will be no one’s fault but their own if anything disagreeable comes of it.”

“I dare say, I dare say,” murmured Philip, vaguely. “I beg your pardon, Allen—I am a little out of sorts to-day.”

“That’s the trouble—you don’t go about enough, you don’t take all the enjoyment out of life that you ought. Do you suppose that I fancy these affairs? that I like weak tea and dry biscuit in the middle of the afternoon? I wouldn’t dare say so to everybody, but I know you won’t give me away. But it’s a sort of duty, don’t you know, to study the human race under all conditions and circumstances—at least, when you’re going in for literature. Why don’t you try it?”

“Ah, but you see I don’t go in for anything just now.”

“Well, you missed it by not turning up at the Baron’s. Mrs. Tom came, after all, and stared at the animals a while. Well, it was a queer crowd,” Mr. Allen went on with a laugh. “Every one was all right enough, of course, only there were so many people who didn’t know one another. By-the-way, Mrs. Cadwalader sent her husband to represent her. He stood in a corner most of the time, and looked as if he were at a funeral. I believe he did manage to have a few words with Mrs. Tom. Miss Lawrence and Miss Annie Linley—she’s a much prettier girl than her sister—sat at the table in a solemn way and poured tea, and Miss Varian—have you seen her in the new piece at the

Lyceum? she's really charming—talked nearly all the afternoon with a red-headed German in the Symphony, and looked bored to death. However, that's the usual thing, don't you know. The real joke was the Baron himself. By-the-way," said Mr. Allen, suddenly perceiving that Yates was not listening very intently, "there's something queer about that secretary of his—you remember the story in the papers, don't you? He looks enough like the Baron to be his father. It's a striking likeness. I couldn't imagine at first whom it was he reminded me of, but afterwards it came over me like a flash. By Jove! Yates—it might be his father!"

"I don't understand you. His father died years ago."

"But he might come to life again, eh? Anyway, it's an extraordinary resemblance."

Mr. Allen's suggestion kept recurring to Philip afterwards, although he tried to treat it at the time as a foolish one. He knew that Mr. Allen had a lively imagination, and he sincerely hoped that it had misled him in this case. It was a melancholy satisfaction, at best, to find his own distrust of Baretta confirmed in this unexpected manner. The worst of it was that Mildred was likely to be involved in any scandal. He would do a good deal to prevent that; and yet, after all, what was it that he could do? Why did her friends let such a fellow as that draw her into his schemes? What were they thinking of? Some one ought to tell Mr. Lawrence what people were saying. When he found a note from Daisy Tredwell at his rooms the next day, asking him to come and see her, he wondered if she, too, had heard this idle gossip, and if he might not appeal to her. He felt that she would understand, that she would not misinterpret his motives. He had quite forgiven her for the unlucky interference that had made him so angry at the time. Somehow or other he was very grateful for her sympathy. He was not one to wear his heart upon his sleeve, and yet sympathy meant so much to him, who had so little of it. "I shall help you yet," Daisy had said. He took a ridiculous satisfaction in recalling her words, although he knew that what she promised was impossible. Who could help him in such a case?—and Daisy least of all. Nevertheless he

was grateful. If it had been Daisy whom he had loved instead of Mildred perhaps he would have been happier than he could now ever hope to be. But was it not a part of the irony of fate that the one woman who had understood him, who had said that she still believed in him, he did not love at all? He hoped that the day would come when the old wound would no longer throb with pain, but he knew that he must go down to his grave bearing the scar. To love any one but Mildred, even after he had ceased to love her, was something so impossible that he put it out of his head altogether.

"I hope you'll forgive me for troubling you," Daisy said, when she saw him. She held out her hand, and he took it in his, while he stood looking down into her blue eyes, which were very soft and appealing just then. "But, oh! I did want to talk to you so much! And I knew you would understand."

"You are very kind to me, Daisy," said Philip, gravely. They sat down near a window looking upon the Mall, facing each other, and for a moment neither spoke.

"I'm a dreadful blunderer," said Daisy, at last, "and if I hurt your feelings in any way you must forgive me. But there is no one else who cares as much as we do, and—and oh! we must prevent it! I am so angry that I don't know what to do, and yet she won't listen to a word from me. You must help me, Philip—you must tell me how to save her. A person like that! It's really too dreadful!"

This was not a very lucid explanation, to be sure, but Philip understood it. "Do you mean to tell me," he asked, pale and serious, "that there is really anything in it?"

"Oh, I don't know! I don't know! Sometimes I think there isn't, but then she will never hear a word against him. And to go to his reception, and make herself so conspicuous—pouring tea and all that, making every one talk—oh, I will never forgive Mrs. Chilton for it—never, never!"

"It is hardly Mrs. Chilton's fault. I dare say she believes that he is what he pretends to be, and that others, as well as she herself, can decide for themselves. And, after all, Daisy, we know nothing to the contrary."

"It isn't that, altogether; it's himself. How can any one

think that he is even a gentleman? But I know that it's all a deception—I am sure of it. He is afraid that the truth will come out. He suspects me—he shows very plainly that there is some secret that he doesn't wish to have discovered. If I only knew what it was! Don't you know, Philip? Oh, if you do, it isn't right to keep silence any longer."

"I know nothing—nothing!"

"But you have seen more of him than the rest of us—he used to be a friend of yours."

"And do you think it would be honourable, even if I did know anything, to make use of my knowledge? What would you think of me? What would she say?"

"I was sure you could help me!" cried Daisy, laying a trembling hand on his. "And surely you won't refuse what I ask—for her sake."

"I could refuse nothing in reason to you—or to her," Philip answered. "But you are quite wrong to think that it is in my power to interfere." He turned away his face as he spoke, and his eyes rested upon the leafless trees in the Mall. He was thinking of that day in spring when he spoke to Mildred for the last time out there, and she told him that she could never forgive him. "Never is a long word," he heard himself saying. And now what could he do to save her?

"It is only pride on your part—it is not a question of honour at all!" Daisy said. "Because you fear that some one will misconstrue your motives, you will not say a word. Don't you realize how terrible it would be?—to have things go on like this, and then to find out the truth? Anything would be better than that. People are beginning to talk already—oh yes, I know what they say! And to think that she can be deceived by his pretences for a moment."

"You are a little unjust, Daisy," said Philip, after a moment of silence.

"Unjust! It is you who are unjust! There, forgive me—I knew I should offend you. But I am so fond of her, and it drives me fairly wild that I can do nothing."

"Don't consider me ungrateful." Philip rose and walked up and down the room several times, his hands clasped behind him,

his brows knitted in anxious thought. "Daisy," he said at last, "I will do anything I can. But believe me, that I know absolutely no more than you do. He never talked to me particularly about his past; all this story is as new to me as to every one else. Why should I say it isn't true?"

"And yet you believe it isn't."

"Yes. I don't know why, but that is so. And yet I am the last man in the world who should say anything. If I could go to her and warn her—but what is the use of thinking of that?" Philip cried, bitterly.

"Philip!" said Daisy—and were there not tears in the piteous blue eyes?—"it may not be quite so hopeless as you think. She cares for you yet—oh, I am sure that she does!"

"Do you understand what you are saying?" he asked. "If I am to help you—or her—you must put that notion out of your head. I do not deceive myself for a moment. And I must ask you not to speak of it again."

"I told you what a blunderer I was," said Daisy, penitently. "But I shall remember your promise to do anything you can. You must come if I send for you."

She remained deep in thought long after Philip had left her. Then she arose and went up-stairs and dressed for the street. "I don't care if she never speaks to me again," Daisy thought. "I will have my say first." Oh, how exasperating it was that a girl like Mildred should be capable of such folly! To throw over a man like Philip for this low-born foreign adventurer! And what wrong had Philip done? None—absolutely none. She herself would not have treated him so. Perhaps she did not realize that she might cherish for him some stronger feeling than sympathy. If this were so she was playing a generous part just now. "She does not deserve him," Daisy said to herself, angrily, as she walked up Mount Vernon Street in the waning November afternoon.

"I am going to have a very serious talk with you," was what she told Mildred. She had resolved to be as diplomatic as possible, to say nothing of Philip, to give her friend no reason to suspect why she had come. She recalled the curious fact that

in her conversation with Philip neither Mildred's name nor Barretta's had once been mentioned.

"Oh, dear! that's a formidable beginning," said Mildred, smiling. "What have I done to offend you now?"

"Why should you think I am offended? Does your conscience trouble you? I wish some other people had consciences to trouble them," Daisy added, rather spitefully.

"Well, if I'm not in your bad graces, Daisy, who is?"

"I didn't say any one was. Isn't it an awfully dismal kind of day. Oh!" cried Daisy, suddenly, with a fine assumption of carelessness, "did you enjoy yourself at the Baron's yesterday?"

"Yes," said Mildred, coolly. She suspected now why it was that her friend had threatened a serious talk. How absurdly unjust Daisy was to those she didn't fancy!

"Of course every one was there. Mrs. Chilton and all the tribe—and Mr. Pinkerton—did he go? he doesn't love the Baron—and Mr. Allen, of course; he goes everywhere."

"Mr. Cadwallader and Mrs. Gregorson looked in for a little while."

"Mrs. Tom? Really? Oh, what fun it must have been! The Baron will be at the top of the heap now."

"Daisy! You're getting to be very slangy."

"And who poured tea?"

"Annie Linley—and I."

"You! Oh, Mildred, I didn't really think you'd go quite so far as that. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Daisy cried, forgetting that she had resolved to be very diplomatic.

"I think you are forgetting yourself," said Mildred, haughtily. "I cannot help it if you choose to ridicule and malign Baron Smolzew, but at least you can refrain from insulting me."

"Insulting you! Who would insult you—unless he would? Oh, I don't care if you never speak to me again. I will tell you the truth now. Baron?—he's no baron at all; he's a low adventurer, and he's trying to compromise you so that you can't refuse him. Yes," cried Daisy, as Mildred rose from her chair with an angry flush, "that's just what he's doing, and you needn't pretend to misunderstand me by thinking I mean more than I do."

He wants people to talk about your being engaged to him, and all that, and then he thinks he can trap you. Baron Smolzow! Why, I tell you that when I have said things to him I have seen him start back, half scared to death—afraid of me—that I had discovered something. You know yourself that he isn't a gentleman, and yet you go on encouraging him. Oh, Mildred!" Daisy said, stamping her foot impatiently, "I'd just like to shake you until you come to your senses! And I'm not the only one who asks, 'How can she endure him?'"

"I am very much obliged to you for talking me over with—others," retorted Mildred, still angry, but with tremulous lips that showed how she was moved by this appeal. "I haven't forgotten your interference once before."

"Oh, how I detest you when you talk like that!"

"And if you have come again as a messenger—"

"A messenger!" cried Daisy, hotly. "Well, if I did, it would be from some one whom you don't deserve—no, you don't, you don't! But I'll never, never say another word. You can make just as big a fool of yourself as you choose, for all me."

"Thank you, dear!" said Mildred, sneeringly. "And if any one is in need of consolation, why don't you do the consoling?"

"Oh!" cried Daisy, with something that was neither a laugh nor a sob, but a strange mingling of both. She gave her long fur boa a rapid twist and picked up her muff. "I never thought that you could say such a mean thing as that," she said. She hurried to the door, but at the threshold she turned and flung back a final shot. "You deserve to live and die an old maid, and I hope you will!"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DIPLOMACY OF HERR EMIL

"PAH! You make me madt. You are a tam fool—dat's vat you are!" Herr Emil was striding up and down the room impatiently, his brows knotted, his face flushed with anger. "Ees all I haf done to go for notings—notings? *Ach, der Dummkopf! der Narr!*" Suddenly he halted and stamped his foot. "Vy not you spik? Vy not you say sometings?" he cried.

"What should I say?" asked Baron Smolzow, in a sullen tone. "I am not accountable to you for my actions."

"I make you der Herr Baron—you forget dat."

"Well, then, unmake me. I don't care; I am sick and tired of the whole business. Nothing goes right—every one is against me. There's that fellow Allen; he'll find out the truth some day, and I might as well give in now."

"Gif in! And what will become of me?"

"I don't care what becomes of you; I wish I had never seen you!" cried Baretta. "You can go to the devil, if you like!" he added, angrily.

His father laughed; but it was not a pleasant laugh to hear. "Oh!" he said. "And I tell you one tings—ven I go I take you mit me." He laughed again; then he put on his hat and left the room.

It was true that he did not care, that he was sick and tired of everything, Baretta said to himself when he was alone; and he wished most heartily that his father might go away and never come back to trouble bim. It was the day after Maud's unexpected visit to his rooms, and he had told his father bluntly that he intended to marry the girl. He thought that he had at last

quite made up his mind to this sacrifice. After all, Maud loved him as he would never be loved by any one else, and his painful struggles for social eminence had left him unsatisfied and lonely. For a time, indeed, he had been supremely content with himself and his prospects. It was so much to be Baron Smolzew, and to go to houses like Mrs. Cadwallader's, and to be taken up by Mrs. Gregorson! The contrast to life in Arragon Street was wellnigh bewildering. Naturally enough, he had regarded it as the height of folly longer to think of Maud, in spite of that queer fondness for her, of which he was conscious whenever the memories of the old days came back to him. But to sit alone in luxuriously furnished rooms was not so very much of a pleasure; and to have his father's company—that was worse than all. He had nothing else to look forward to—no, nothing. Somehow he could not win friends. He suspected every one of distrusting him, of plotting against him. More than that, he was reminded in a hundred ways of the differences between him and these new acquaintances—differences which being a baron did not overcome in the least. Society had an atmosphere of its own, and mere resolution did not seem to go far in making one a gentleman. Thus he experienced the unwelcome sensation of receiving numberless slights even while he was being flattered and lionized. Most of them were not meant for slights, but they cut none the less deeply for all that. The self-esteem of this young man, as the reader has already perceived, was very great; and to injure that was to strike him in a vital part. Often he came back to his rooms with a bitter sense of failure, of humiliation, and vowed that he would abandon forever the effort to hold his own with those who continued to look down on him despite his title. But of course it was a resolution which he never carried into effect. "Colours seen by candle-light will not look the same by day," Mrs. Browning says somewhere. Besides, how could he give up his hopes in one direction—his ambition to marry Miss Lawrence? He was not sure that he was really so fond of her as he had been of Maud, although once he had thought otherwise, and Maud had been to him, as she herself had felt, only a "second best." Miss Lawrence was too proud and cold, and he knew that even if he suc-

ceeded in marrying her he would not be happy; but for a man who wants to get on there are things more important than happiness. If he had not seen Maud again, he would never have abandoned his hopes in that direction, faint as he was sometimes forced to admit they were. Now he hardly regretted his prospective withdrawal from the race. What was the use, he asked himself, so long as his father was by to keep him in perpetual torment? It was better, much better, to end everything by a single stroke.

Herr Emil came back presently, having apparently got rid of his anger by exercise in the open air. "I spik too harshly, *mon fils*," he said, in his most benignant manner. "I do not mean you are a tam fool."

"Well, there's no use talking," replied Baretta. "I have made up my mind."

"So? And Mees Lawrence—vat she say?"

"It won't make any difference to her!" exclaimed the young man, rather bitterly. "Look here," he added, "you might as well understand first as last that I never had any chance. I dare say she's still in love with that fellow Yates."

"Yates? Who is Yates?" asked Herr Emil. "I do not know him."

"Anyway," said Baretta, not answering this question, "what difference does it make? I don't want to stay here in Boston. If I get those estates we can go over there."

"Pooh, pooh!" cried Herr Emil, beginning to pace up and down the room again. "You do not spik sense. Do you tink dey efer gif you der money?"

"Then what good are the papers you showed me? Do you mean to say there is no truth at all in your story—that you never even knew Paul Baretta?"

"Knew him? Oh yes, I knew him. Am not I Paul Baretta—who died and was buried so long ago?"

"I wish you would be honest with me—that you would tell me all," said Baretta, impatiently.

"*Eh, bien*, François! you haf no reason in what you say. Leesten, and do not be foolish. I know Paul Baretta; oh yes, I know him goot. He comes to America; he fights in der great

war; he is wounded *im Schlacht bei Antietam*. Oh yes—and he marries *die schöne Amerikanerin*. He has a son, who is now der Herr Baron Smolzow, *nicht wahr?* Vat more do you veeesh?"

"But you—if I am the son of Paul Baretta, who are you?"

"*Moi?* You are stupide, François. You are my son."

"Oh, I am out of all patience with you!" cried Baretta. "I know very well that you have played some devil's game, and that if I am your son I am no more Baron Smolzow than you are. Well, I refuse to carry out my part of it; I will have no more to do with you. I don't care how soon you tell them that it is all a fraud—a lie. I don't know how you got Paul Baretta's papers, but I know you are not Paul Baretta. Perhaps you are not my father; but even if I am the rightful heir I will give up my claim. Nothing can be gained by putting it forward; you say yourself that I need not hope to have it recognized. Well, then, I give it up. Do you hear?" he cried, angrily; "I give it up. You can do what you like, and go where you please; I'll have nothing more to do with you. I tell you that I'm sick and tired of the whole thing. The truth will have to come out some time. There's Yates—go and tell your story to him. He'll be pleased enough—he'll pay you well for it, I'll be bound! I guess you can get more money out of him than out of me. Now I'm going away. I hope I shall never see you again. You'd better go before I come back. Perhaps I sha'n't come back at all. Good God!" cried Baretta, with a sudden access of fury, "what do you stand grinning at me like that for? Do you think I'm not in earnest? You'll see whether I am or not!"

But Herr Emil kept on smiling even after the young man had rushed out, slamming the door behind him. "Oh, ho! I see how it ees!" he muttered. "It ees that tam Maudt." Herr Emil's smile was not at this moment an agreeable one. "*Ja, ja!*" he said, presently; "it ees that tam Maudt." Then he, too, went out, but he did not slam the door. "*Ja, ja!*" he said again when he was in the street. Somehow or other this ungrateful young man's folly must be checked before it had gone too far and wrought irreparable mischief. Herr Emil was sure that he had thought of a way to check it, and he nodded with satisfaction several times as he turned from the avenue into a

side street, from which access could be gained to a foot-bridge crossing the line of the Old Colony Railway, and providing a short cut into Columbus Avenue. He professed to be a stranger in the city, but he knew the way to Roxbury very well. The address which he had in his pocket was in a neighbourhood perfectly familiar to him. He had copied it that morning from a card which he had found lying upon the Baron's dressing-case. There was no name upon the card, only a street and number in the Baron's handwriting. He was pretty sure whose address it was.

"Ees Mees Maudt zu *Hause*?" he asked in his most insinuating manner of the untidy woman who came to the door.

"Miss Maud what?" asked Mrs. Jackson. "She told me her name was Vivian," added the good woman, suspiciously. "But I thought it wasn't her name."

"Oh, yes—it ees her name," said Herr Emil, politely. "Mees Veevian. I veesh to see her."

"Well, she ain't in. She don't git home till seven o'clock or after."

"So? *Ich komme bald zurück*—I vill come again."

"What do you want of her, anyway?" Mrs. Jackson asked. "You're a furriner, ain't you?"

"*Ja, ja*, madame; an old frendt. She vill be glat to see me. Oh *ja*, I vill come again." Herr Emil raised his hat politely and turned to go down the steps.

"Well!" cried Mrs. Jackson, banging the door. She felt that something must be wrong. "What did he call her?" she said to herself. "I knew she didn't give her real name. If there's anything wrong, out she goes to-morrow." And with this charitable resolve she went back to the kitchen, where she had left a pan of rolls just ready to put into the oven.

"Some foreigner?" repeated Maud, vaguely, when Mrs. Jackson told her of her caller.

"He said he was an old friend, but I guess that wa'n't so. Say, what is it all about?" Mrs. Jackson asked. "I can't have no queer goings-on here."

"What do you mean by queer goings-on?" exclaimed Maud, indignantly. "Why are you always talking as if you suspected

me? If that's the way you feel, I guess I'd better go, any way. My week will be up to-morrow."

"You needn't git mad. I ain't a suspicious person. But I don't hold by furriners, and when that gray-bearded old man came round askin' for you by some furrin name—"

"Oh, he had a gray beard? Very well, Mrs. Jackson, I know who it is," said Maud, with dignity. "If he comes again I will see him. And of course I will go to-morrow."

Mrs. Jackson stared after her as she swept proudly upstairs. "Well, what are you gittin' mad about?" called out the astonished woman. "I hain't told ye to go yet, have I? My!" she added, as she returned once more to her pots and pans, "that gal needs takin' down a peg. She's too much of a high-flyer for me!"

But Maud might have broken down and cried had any one been by to sympathize with her. The feeling of exultation in the promise of a new life—the hope that her lover really meant they should not be separated again—had naturally enough been followed by a reaction. In the cold, dull light of morning that happy parting of the evening before already seemed to be something remote and unreal. It must be that her hopes were delusive. When he came to see how much he would have to sacrifice he would again be convinced that he must give her up. But she could not submit quietly to her fate this time; after a renewed glimpse of happiness it would be impossible. And if in the end she should have to submit—oh, she could not think of that! she would not believe it! She felt that she had already endured as much as it was in human nature to endure. Poor Maud! who even yet had not tested her full capacity for suffering. Few of us do that, however bitter seems the burden that is laid upon us.

And now that man who had been with Frank yesterday afternoon—that man whom she instinctively hated—had been trying to find her. What did he want? Why should he come except as a bearer of evil tidings? She had told Mrs. Jackson she would see him if he came again, because she was angry with her landlady for daring to suspect her of anything wrong; but she had a miserable dread of him and his errand. She re-

membered that he had a cruel face in spite of his smile. Why should he come to see her? What had he to do with her—or with Frank? Who was he? She kept on asking herself these questions although she knew there was no way of answering them. It could not be that Frank himself had sent him—Frank who had left her only last evening with a kiss and a whispered fond word. Oh, he could not mean to give her up like that—to send this stranger to tell her that her dream was so soon at an end! She ought not even for a moment to suspect such a thing. But it is one thing, alas! to love a person, and another to trust him. She remembered that she had never been quite sure of Frank. The tears were running down Maud's face now as all these wretched doubts and fears assailed her. She started violently and wiped them away when she heard a gentle tap at the door.

"Pardon," said Herr Emil's voice. "I come up because *le concierge* said you expect me. *Il est très curieux, le concierge*, and I veesh to spik mit you alone." Herr Emil coughed as he closed the door softly behind him. "Pardon—monsieur downstairs smokes fery badt tabac."

"What do you want of me?" cried Maud, rising and facing him with an air of defiance. She would not let him see that she was afraid, even although she felt strangely weak and was trembling like a leaf.

"*Je suis tout seul*—you need not fear. I am kvite alone. But perhaps you, too, spik only the English? So? Ah!" Herr Emil sighed gently, and smiled at her encouragingly. "It ees no mataire. But do you not ask me to take a seat? *Eh, bien!* do you not veesh to see me? *C'est à regretter!*"

"I guess you can sit down if you like," said Maud. "Did—did Frank know you were coming? Did he send you?"

"Frank? Oh, ah!—der Herr Baron Smolzow. Yes, he send me. It gifs him sorrow that he cannot come himself."

"Cannot come? Then he must be ill. Oh, tell me that it isn't that!" cried Maud, clasping her hands imploringly.

"*Mein schönes Fräulein*, you excite yourself too much. He is vell."

The words somehow struck a chill to the girl's heart. She

sank into a chair, her face pale, her eyes fixed vaguely upon the man standing before her. It was true, then, that all was indeed over between them, that his brave words about their never being separated again had meant nothing. Oh, why, why had he told her that, only to shatter her hopes more remorselessly than ever? "He is well?" repeated Maud, in the mechanical tone of one who is learning a lesson. "What is it you have to say to me that he couldn't say himself?"

"I greef for you, Fräulein," said Herr Emil, softly, flourishing a handkerchief, previous to wiping away an imaginary tear. "It ees my veakness—I am too sympathetique. I am sorry that you take dese tings so mooch to heart. The Herr Baron is distressed, too. He ees sorry that you understand him not. The Herr Baron has too mooch—vat you say—eempulse. He luf you—oh, *ja*, he luf you. But"—here the Baron's confidential adviser waved his hand impressively—"there are reasons. *Sie verstehen?* 'Sist unmöglich—it ees impossible."

"What is impossible? What do you mean? How dare you come and talk to me like this?" Maud rose from the chair; the colour rushed back to her face; her eyes dilated and flashed with sudden anger. "I won't listen to you; I don't believe a word you say. He never sent you here. Who are you, anyway?"

"*Moi?*" Herr Emil smiled again. He was perfectly calm, and an observer would have said that he was rather enjoying the scene, in spite of his professions of distress. "*Moi?*" he repeated. "I am his fader."

"You? That's a lie. His father is dead."

"Dedt—oh, *ja*; I am dedt. It ees our little zecret. I am dedt; I am buried. Der funeral sharge was heafy. But ven I lif again he is no more der Herr Baron. He is ruint—he lose his money—everytings. And I am not dedt ven you not gif him up. Oh, *ja*—dey did not bury me deep enough. And you do not give him up. *Quel malheur!*"

"It's a lie—it's all a lie!" sobbed Maud. "I don't know what you mean. I won't believe a thing unless he tells me. He loves me—he don't love her, that other girl who tried to take him away from me. How can you be his father?"

I won't believe it! Oh, why don't he come to tell me it's all a lie?"

"My dear Fräulein, you excite yourself. It ees true. I am sorry, but I cannot help it. I haf a duty to perform; I haf always been a slafe to duty. You vill not beleef me? So? I go to him, and I say, 'It ees all ofer. You are ruint. She vill not gif you up.' *Ja, ja*—it ees a great pity."

"You his father! I will not listen to you any longer; I know he didn't send you to tell me that. Why don't you go away?" cried Maud, stamping her foot. "I'll have you put out of the house if you don't."

"So?" Herr Emil said, with a sneer. "Oh, I vill go—yes, I vill go. But you vill veesh I had not gone. Adieu, Fräulein." He took up his hat and was about to open the door, but paused with his hand on the knob. "*Man kommt*," he muttered. Then he quickly drew the door back, shutting himself behind it as it swung inward towards the wall.

"Oh, Frank! Frank!" It was indeed he who appeared at the threshold, and Maud ran forward to meet him, throwing herself into his arms and beginning to cry bitterly. "Oh, Frank! have you come back to me? It is not true that you want to leave me again. I told him so—I told him so!"

"Told who so?" asked Baretta, bewildered. "Why are you crying? and what has happened? Who said I wanted to leave you?"

But Maud could not answer just then. She hid her face on his shoulder and let the tears flow freely. She had known it was all a lie—that he would come back to her—that he still loved her as much as ever. Surely it was for very joy that she cried.

"What is it? what has happened?" repeated Baretta.

"Oh, send him away—send him away!"

"Send who away? There is no one here." He thought that Maud must be out of her head—that perhaps she was ill, and had let some feverish fancy take possession of her. As he held her closer to him, and gently stroked her hair, he realized how unkind he had been to her, how much she must have suffered during all these months. Poor Maud! He would make it up

to her at any cost to himself. It gave him a glow of virtuous satisfaction to think of so noble a piece of self-sacrifice. "I guess you've been dreaming," Baretta said. "The room is empty—no one is here but us."

Maud lifted her face and pointed to the door. "He's behind there," she said.

"Behind there?" Baretta advanced a step or two, but at that moment heavy footsteps were heard ascending the stairs, and both listened involuntarily. "You seem to be holding a sort of reception," he said, grimly. Then he started back with a look of alarm, for it was Dolan who came rushing into the room.

"Ye dom villain!" Dolan cried, advancing with uplifted fist. "I'll tache ye to play yer durrty thricks with a dacent gyurl!"

. But Maud with a piercing shriek threw herself between them. "He'll kill you, Frank! he'll kill you!" she screamed.

"Shtand asoide—it's him I'm reckonin' wid." He flung her off impatiently and again advanced on Baretta, who had been staring at him, apparently incapable either of speech or action. "To trate a dacent gyurl loike that!" he cried, with a curse. "But I'll fix yer—I'm her father, and I'll fix yer!"

"At this point Herr Emil walked out from behind the door. *Eh, bien!* her fader?" he said, calmly. "So? Vell, I am his!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

BARETTA REFUSES TO YIELD

"THE other furriner!" cried Dolan, turning to confront this unexpected intruder. He stared stupidly at Herr Emil, not in the least understanding even yet who he was or what he was doing here. "Phwat the divvle!" he muttered, helplessly.

"Oh yes—I am his fader," said Herr Emil, blandly. "And ven you vill leesten to me it ees very goot frendts ve vill be."

But here Baretta, whose astonishment at the interruption had been almost as great as Dolan's, stepped forward, his face white with rage. "You villain! you traitor! what are you doing here? How dare you interfere in my affairs in this way? It's a lie—you're not my father; I defy you to prove it!"

Herr Emil shrugged his shoulders. "Ve vill keep dis leetle mataire to ourselves," he said, as he closed the door, almost in the face of Mrs. Jackson and her worthy husband, who had been attracted to the scene by the sound of voices loud in dispute. "M. le Concierge smokes tam badt tabac," he added, coughing.

"What has he been saying to you, Maud? Was it him that made you cry?" demanded Baretta, forgetting his grammar in his excitement. "As for you," he said, turning to Dolan, "you're all wrong. I haven't harmed your daughter; she'll tell you that I haven't. I never saw her after she left your house until yesterday—did I, Maud? I tell you I can prove it, if you don't believe me. But what's that to you, anyway, you damned low-down brute!—you that struck her and drove her out into the street? By Heaven! I have my own account to settle with you—yes, and with him, and with them all!" Baretta said, his dark eyes blazing with passion.

"Oh, Frank! Frank!" exclaimed Maud, who was crying again, and looking in a bewildered way from one man to another. What did it all mean? How had her father found her out? and why did this stranger, who had said he was Frank's father, come to make things worse?

Meanwhile, Dolan, although he was still far from understanding the situation, remembered that his first duty was to have his revenge upon the fellow who had taken his girl away. Of course he did not believe Baretta's denial. Hadn't he himself seen Maud coming out of his house with him? and who could tell how long it had been going on? "I'll tache ye to play yer thricks on a dacent gyurl!" he cried, once more rushing at the young man. His heavy fist sent Baretta staggering backward, but before he could repeat the attack, before Maud, who was too much frightened even to scream, could interpose, his eye fell upon the gleaming barrel of a revolver.

"It ees a bretty tings," said Herr Emil, who had stepped forward quickly, and who now stood between Dolan and the object of his vengeance. "It was gifen to me by der Herr Baron Paul—*ach, ja!* it was his own. I haf a badt way of carrying it loadted. I should not veesh it to go off by mistakes. *Das würde schrecklich sein, nicht wahr?*" Herr Emil lowered his weapon as he spoke and gazed at it affectionately.

"Oh, put that thing away—my God! put it away!" cried Maud, with a woman's instinctive dread of fire-arms.

But Dolan and Baretta both stared helplessly at Herr Emil. They had not reckoned upon a diversion of this sort, and neither knew exactly what to do in the face of it.

"You haf a leetle kvarrel," Herr Emil said, taking advantage of their silence; "oh, *ja, ja*—dere vill be time for dat—but not before a ladty. Fräulein, I respect your veeshes." He bowed and put the revolver back in his pocket. "I tink ven you hear vat I say we can settle our leetle mataire. Mees Maudt, *wollen Sie gefälligst ein Platz nehmen?*—vill you sit down? No? Present me to your fader—I know not his name."

"You mind your own business!" interrupted Baretta, savagely. He was so exasperated by all that had happened that he was oblivious to all the dangers that might follow taking matters

into his own hands. He was in the midst of his enemies—his father was the worst enemy of all—and he must fight for himself. What did he care for threats? What if the truth were known to all the world? Maud loved him and believed in him; Maud was the only friend he had on éarth. Let the rest conspire against him if they chose; he would stand by Maud.

"Oh, I mind my own beesness!" said Herr Emil, mockingly. "So? It vill be your beesness, you tam ungrateful shcoundrel!"

"Do you think I care for your threats? Do your worst! Don't cry, Maud—I'll never give you up, let them say what they please. As for you, you brute!" cried Baretta, turning to Dolan, "you needn't think that I'll forget to pay you for what you did that night, or just now—or to her, either!" he added, remembering that it was Maud who had suffered most from Dolan's outbreaks of wrath. "But if you think that either of us is responsible to you, you're mistaken, that's all. What affair is it of yours? You drove her out of your house with your cruelty, and she's taken care of herself ever since. And I—I—" here he hesitated a moment, then burst forth, "I'm going to marry her in spite of you both—and you can do your worst if you like. I don't care what comes of it. I'm going to marry her. I guess I won't go back on that now." He laughed irritably, then added: "I wish you'd both get out of this and leave us to ourselves. You've no right here, either of you. Do you understand?" cried he, stamping his foot. "Why don't you go?"

"The imperence of the durrtty baste!" muttered Dolan, astounded at the turn things were taking. But he did not resume active hostilities. He prided himself on being a handy man with his fists, and was confident that he could have knocked out any two foreigners with the utmost ease. A revolver, however, was a weapon with which he had only a limited acquaintance, and he felt that Herr Emil's possession of one was a factor in the situation not to be disregarded.

"You make a tam fool of yourself," said Herr Emil, taking up the conversation at this point. "I forgeef vat you say to me if you listen and be reasonable now. It ees because I am so veek zat I forgeef," he explained, with a glance at Maud, who was still standing with a bewildered gaze that wandered from

one man to another as each spoke; and then at Baretta and at Dolan—one defiant, the other merely sullen. “*Monsieur le père de Mademoiselle*—you haf not present me—it can all be settled. Der Herr Baron has not run away mit your daughter; she came to see him yesterday for the first time—I svare it on my honour. You mistake; there ees no harm whatefer. The Herr Baron veeshes to marry her—oh, goot! goot! *Er ist ein edler Mensch, aber*—I say it ees impossible. *Il est fiancé*—it ees another Fräulein he ees to marry; you vill see it all in de papers. Oh, I know, I know! But no harm has been done. Mees Maudt vill see that no harm has been done; she vill be gladt to know of her old friendt’s good-fortune. She knows that if he marry her he vill no longer be the Herr Baron at all,” said Herr Emil, with a quick glance at the girl. “So? she knows dat—she remembair vat I tells her. *Eh, bien!* she remembair. But if it ees money—oh, ve are not reech, but ve vill find a vay—”

“How dare you stand there and talk like that?” broke in Baretta. “Don’t you pay any attention to him, Maud. I shall do as I choose, and he can say what he likes.”

“Av coorse,” began Dolan, looking first at Baretta and then at Herr Emil, “if he’s afther marryin’ her and makkin’ a leddy av her—”

“You are a tam fool, too!” cried Herr Emil, impatiently. “He can make no ladty of any one but Mees Lawrence—oh, I shall tell all, and you can stamp your foot all you like,” he added, with a glance of disdain at his son. “It ees der troot—he vill not deny it. He is no baron—he is my son, and no baron at all. But I haf the papers—I tell lies for him and make him baron. I do that—*moi, son père!*—and he treats me as a dog. But I do it to help him marry the reech Mees—not you, Fräulein, charming as you are. So you perceif? Ven he marry you I make him vat he was before. He lose everytings. Vy, he go to prison for fraudt. Oh, *ja!* you perceif, *nicht wahr?*”

“Prison!” cried Maud, catching at the one word in this harangue which really conveyed some definite meaning to her mind. “Prison! and for me? Oh, no, no!” said Maud, bursting into tears, “anything but that, Frank—I will not have you do that. Leave me—oh, leave me before I’m sorry I said it. I

will not marry you. Do you hear me, Frank? I won't marry you as long as I live; no, never! Why don't you go when I tell you that? Oh!" poor Maud cried, "if you would only all go and leave me to myself!"

"*Sie haben recht, Fräulein*—you spik sense. You see, Mees Maudt is no fool. Come, François, we go; it ees no use we are here?"

"Go?" retorted Baretta. "Maud, let him do his worst. I shall stand by you. Yes, I tell you I will," he said, as his father burst into a mocking laugh. "I am sick of you and your schemes; I am sick of trying to rise in the world with you at hand to pull me down. What good has it all done me? what good can it do me? I give it all up; I'm going back where I belong. Don't cry, Maud—for Heaven's sake, how easily you women cry! there's nothing to cry about. As for your talk about prison—was there ever such rot? Prison! I guess you'd go there before me. As for you, Dolan, you'd better clear out, too. I haven't forgotten what I owe you, and I'll pay you out yet. So will I all of them, all—all! You, and you—and that damned Yates, and Allen, and her—the girl who laughed at me and called me no baron at all. They'll know the truth now, but I'll be even with them—and with you!" he cried, with another look of vindictive hatred at his father, "with you most of any one! Tell everything, if you like, but it will be the bitterest day's work for yourself that you ever did. Maud, you're the only friend I have in the world, and I'll stand by you!"

"So!" said Herr Emil, vindictively. "You cast me off! Goot—very goot! You vill find out sometings before long. And you," he added, turning to Maud, "you let him do it—you veesh him to be ruint for you? Goot—very goot!"

"No, no!" Maud sobbed. "Haven't I told him not to think of me any more? to go away and never come back? But, oh, Frank! it was cruel to make me forget that you were so far above me—to make me think that everything was the same as if we had never parted."

"Phwat the divvle are yez all droivin' at, I'd loike to know?" interrupted Dolan. "I can't make head or tail of these dom furriners at all. I'd have ye know that she's a dacent gyurl,

and if it ain't marryin' he manes he'll have me to dale with—an' in a way he won't be afther forgettin'—moind that," Dolan said, menacingly. He still thought that it was his duty to give Baretta a good pummelling, upon general principles, but recollections of the revolver restrained his ardour. There was never any knowing what these dagoes would do. He still persisted in regarding Baretta as a "dago," and of course this man who called himself Baretta's father must be of the same breed. He would not voluntarily have chosen a dago for a son-in-law, but he felt that in this case the choice was forced upon him. He did not even attempt to understand Baretta's explanations. Whether he had taken her away from Arragon Street or not, here he was keeping company with her, and the honour of the Dolans demanded that he should marry her. That was the main point; all else was confusion.

"I will not go, Maud; I'll stand by you!" said Baretta again. "Let him," he cried, pointing to his father—"let him do his worst! I defy him—I defy them all! I'll show them how I can revenge myself. You're a fool, Dolan. Your daughter is of age—she can do whatever she likes. And she is going to marry me. Pah! do you think I'm afraid of either of you?"

"Oh no; you are not afraidt." Herr Emil laughed scornfully, and went up to Dolan, and took him by the arm. "Come," he said, "der young beeples do not vant us; de faders are in de vay. Come." He led Dolan, who was still too much confused to resist, to the door. At the threshold he turned and looked at his son. "You vill be sorry for dis, you tam fool," he said.

As the door closed behind the two men, Maud sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands. "Go, go!" she murmured. "I ain't worth it, Frank. Oh!" she cried, looking up for a moment, "what will he do to you?"

"Maud! darling Maud!" Baretta knelt anxiously by her side, putting one arm about her waist. "He can't do anything to me. Don't cry like that—I hate to see you cry. You won't think now that I don't care for you, will you?"

Indeed, he thought that he had displayed a wonderful amount of courage, and that she ought to be very grateful indeed to him for the sacrifice which he had made. He did not yet re-

gret it, although perhaps there was already some anticipation in his mind of the time when he would do so. It was so much, so very much, that he had given up for her sake! He could hardly appreciate this aspect of the case, to be sure, while he was with Maud, and conscious of the first virtuous glow of thinking himself a hero. Besides, it was a great relief to be rid of his father, the burden of whose society had been of late almost too heavy to be borne. It was not worth while even to be Baron Smolzow at such a cost. Baron Smolzow! the young man smiled grimly as he reflected that hereafter he would be plain Francis Baretta again. The glory which he had risked everything to gain had been brief enough. But, after all, would his father dare say anything? What could he say without compromising himself? Pooh! those were idle threats. Let him do his worst!

"Frank, dear, I can't help crying," Maud was saying. "I know it's silly of me, but, oh! I have been so unhappy thinking that I should lose you, after all. And I know now that I have no right to think of—of anything in the future. I guess you'd better go, Frank."

"Maud! I wish you'd make an end of that nonsense." He seized her hands, which she was still holding before her face, and, drawing them away, kissed her passionately. "I won't have any more talk about it," he said; "I'll marry you to-morrow."

"No—oh no! Not so soon as that!" Maud freed her hands from his and covered her face again. "You ain't sure you care for me," she whispered. "I don't want you to be sorry afterwards."

"I'll marry you to-morrow," Baretta repeated, uncovering her face and kissing her again. "I tell you I will. What's the use of waiting? They can't take you away from me then, and I'll defy them all. Maud, you must say 'yes.'"

He pleaded with an ardour that deceived himself as well as her. It was so easy in this moment of self-sacrifice to resolve to do all sorts of things that one's cooler judgment might shrink from sanctioning. And then, to be here at her feet, holding her close to him, drinking in her fresh young charm, her palpitating beauty, with eager eyes—what would not one say, what not promise, under such conditions?

But Maud, with that shrinking delicacy which girls of every class feel when a decision like this is forced upon them, would promise nothing. "Oh no! not to-morrow!" she said, again and again.

"There's nothing to wait for. Indeed, there's every reason why it should be at once. The day after to-morrow, then."

"No, no!"

"The next day!—the next? See here, Maud!" cried he, rising, and looking down at her with a frown; "I didn't think you'd act like a foolish child about it. Why should we wait? Something might happen, and then— Oh, very well!" Baretta said, irritably. "All is, don't blame me."

Maud rose, too, and went up to him, and laid her hand upon his arm. "Frank, dear," she said, gently, "I will say next Monday, if that will please you. I guess you know well enough," she added, smiling through her tears, "that I ain't likely to blame you."

He caught her in his arms and kissed her, and when they parted there was no hidden bitterness in her heart at least. The young man went away, indeed, wondering just how it had all happened, and why he was so very much in love with this girl, who was far beneath him. Even if he were no longer to be Baron Smolzow he would have to think that. She could not sympathize with his intellectual aspirations; she could not appreciate, except vaguely, his mental superiority. And although she was pretty enough, certainly, and very fond of him, she was no prettier than hosts of other girls. But she was the one friend he had in the world, and she would believe in him whatever happened; he kept repeating this formula as if it might be a consolation for his defeated hopes in other directions. Somehow, now that he was no longer with Maud, he began to realize that there would be need of consolation. Yes, it was very much that he was giving up. He had been courted and flattered, and had become an important personage. If only his father had stayed away and left him to himself! What, after all, did these documents amount to—the papers which he was by no means sure were genuine? He would have got on almost as well without them; no one had yet turned up to dispute his claim, and in

any case the estates were obviously as far away as ever. He felt that he had been deluded and cheated, not reflecting at the moment that he had wanted to delude and cheat others. And Miss Lawrence—Mildred! what would she think of it all? This was the question in his mind when he let himself into his own rooms, and gazed curiously about, with a sense that the possession of them had already passed away from him. Mildred! who would learn that he had never been Baron Smolzow at all. He threw himself into a chair, and sat there for a long time in the dim light, hardly stirring except now and then to press his hands to his throbbing temples. The fire in the grate burned very low, and still he sat there. When he heard the hour of midnight counted out by a neighbouring clock, he rose with a half-suppressed groan and went to bed. It was some time after that before his father came home, and Baretta had fallen asleep and did not hear him.

CHAPTER XXIX

HERR EMIL SETS A TRAP

"Oh yes; you shall get even mit him some days," Herr Emil was saying. As soon as he saw that longer argument was hopeless he had taken Dolan by the arm and had led him from the room. "It ees true vat he says; you haf no right to touch her. You vill get into trouble. Oh yes—I know! But ven you leesten to me I vill show you a vay." It was then that he had hurried Dolan, dazed and helpless, down the stairs. "You vill find it very comique," he said to the worthy Jacksons, who were still lying in wait below with the hope of satisfying their curiosity. He half dragged, half pushed, his companion through the door; then he stood on the pavement looking back at the house. "Oh yes; you shall get even mit him some days," Herr Emil said.

"She's a dacent gyurl—I'd have ye know that," cried Dolan, starting to go up the steps again.

"He vill marry her; oh yes, he vill marry her. I am his fader, and I vill see to dat. You come away; it ees no goot you can do. And I vant to tell you some tings. You must leesten to me."

"I'll take her away, an' be dommed to ye! Lave me alone! I'll knock ye down if ye don't," Dolan said, trying to free himself from Herr Emil's grasp.

"Do not you be a fool, too. It ees no goot you can do, I say, by going back. If you vill come mit me I haf a plan to tell you. Oh, it ees a great plan—you shall see."

"The durrty blackguard! I mane to punch his dom head, that I do."

"*Ja, Ja!* It vill be so ven you leesten to me." Herr Emil took Dolan by the arm again. "Vare do you go? I veesh to talk it ofer mit you."

Dolan hesitatêd. "If ye're afther playin' any tricks on me—" he began.

"No, no—it ees no trick. *Mon Dieu!* I am his fader, and he despise me—he defy me! I vill make him sorry. Come—I veesh you to help me."

After all, Dolan thought, more might be gained by listening to this strange man than by going back. He had come to see Maud in spite of Luck's command that he should not do so, and he was a little uncertain as to the outcome of it all. When, after tracking Maud and Baretta to the house in Roxbury, he had told Luck of his discovery, he had been made to promise that he would do nothing further until he was bid. He had grumbled at this, but another five dollars had quieted his scruples for the time. The more he thought it over, however, the hotter his rage against the young man became. Why should he lose a chance to pay him out, just to please Luck? There was no satisfaction in a promise of vicarious vengeance. Dolan brooded over his wrongs all day, and in the evening went out to Roxbury again. He saw Baretta enter the house, and then, after a moment of hesitation, rushed up the steps and rang the bell. "I want to see my gyurl," was the only explanation which he vouchsafed to Mr. Jackson, as he brushed by him and stumped up the stairs, guided by the sound of Maud's voice above, crying out apparently in fear. And now he hadn't succeeded in getting even with anybody, but was being led away by this persuasive stranger—the other foreigner, who said he was Baretta's father.

"If you're decayvin' me it 'll be the worst day's work yous ever did," Dolan said, turning to Herr Emil, as they walked down the street.

"Deceif you? Oh no! I vill tell you vat I do," replied Herr Emil, blandly.

"Ye'd better tell Luck." The situation was quite beyond Dolan's comprehension, but it occurred to him that Luck, who hated Baretta so vindictively, would know how to deal with it. "Are ye a frind to the poor man?" Dolan asked.

"De poor man?" repeated Herr Emil.

"Becaze I could take ye to our society," continued Dolan.

"Your society? Oh, it ees for poor men, *nicht wahr?* I see, I see."

"Do ye? Well, we don't want no thraitors, moind that. We pitch them into the shtrate, the way we did him—an' dom him for the whack he gave me!"

"And Luck? Who is Monsieur Luck?" asked Herr Emil.

"And—pardon!—who are you?"

"I'm Peter Dolan, I am, and a bad un to handle whin I'm mad. Just you remember that, Misther Furriner!"

"Ah, Dolong! *cher* Dolong! I am Emil—der fader of der Herr Baron Smolzow. You ask, vy I am Emil, and he der Herr Baron? You vill know some days. It ees our leetle zecret. But, oh yes—you vill know some days. And who is Monsieur Luck?"

"His name's Steve, not Moosyear, Mr. Emil," said Dolan. "An' it's that b'y of yours he's afther fer callin' him a bloody scoundrel. Him and me is frinds."

"Ah, ha—so! so! I learn mooch from you, Dolong; it ees a goot ting ve shall haf to do. Dolong, vare is Stefe-Luck?"

"I'll take ye there—if ye're a rale frind to the poor man." Dolan added, suspiciously.

Thus it was that Luck, in the midst of a violent harangue to the crowd gathered thickly about the tables of the familiar back room in Eliot Street, saw Dolan entering with a person whom he immediately recognized as the crafty-looking foreigner who was associated with Baretta. He was a good deal disconcerted, but after a moment of incoherence he went on with his remarks. What foolish piece of business had Dolan done now? he asked himself. Why had he gone beyond his orders, which were to watch and report, but do nothing, nor make his presence known in any way? Luck was furious at this interference with his plans—an interference that might bring them to naught. What an ass he had been to trust Dolan at all! Perhaps it was this reflection that gave added energy to his denunciation of the manufacturing firm he was attacking. "Fight 'em with their

own weapons, the dirty villains!" Luck cried. "Don't you know that every foreman in the shop carries a revolver? that the superintendent by pressing a button can have fifty damned cops to shoot you down? But when it comes to shooting the best man is the fellow that shoots first—just you remember that."

"No, no, Luck!" cried Ditton, interrupting him at this point. "You don't quite mean that."

"It's what I do mean, Mr. Ditton!" retorted Luck, angrily. "Would they spare us? Why should we spare them?"

A sudden burst of applause came from the corner where Herr Emil and Dolan were sitting. Luck glanced in that direction, and saw that the foreigner was clapping his hands with the utmost enthusiasm—a discovery which partially moderated his wrath against Dolan for disobeying orders. Perhaps Dolan had not been such a fool, after all.

"No, no!" said Ditton again. "Look here, my men, you know that I want you to have your rights—yes, and by force if necessary. But that sort of thing is nothing but murder—you can't call it war—unless you shoot them in self-defence."

At this point a strange interruption occurred. "Vill der shentleman leesten to me?" cried Herr Emil, rising from his seat in spite of Dolan's efforts to pull him back.

"You! who the devil are you?" Luck retorted.

"I vill make it plain," said Herr Emil, blandly. He came down between the tables towards the head of the room. "I beg your pardon," he said, bowing first to Luck and then to Ditton. "It ees a place for free spiking—*nicht wahr?*"

"Who are you?" repeated Luck. "What do you mean by interfering?"

"Pardon! you do not veesh me to spik? I come from *Oesterreich*—vat you call Austria—and I haf seen many things. It ees the landt vare der beeples are crushed. But pardon. I spik not."

"We shall be glad to hear you speak, sir, when our friend Luck has finished," said Ditton, courteously. "I am sure you will have something interesting to tell us."

"*Ja, ja! sehr interresant!*" murmured Herr Emil. "Par-

don!" And he sat down and looked up at Luck with an air of expectation.

"I've had so many interruptions that I guess I might as well stop now," observed Luck, with an air of disgust.

"Go on, go on," urged Ditton. "I didn't mean to put you out."

"Well, you did, whether you meant it or not," was the ungracious retort. "What's this foreigner got to say, anyway?" Luck added, suspiciously. He could not at all understand why Dolan had brought him here, or what his coming forward to speak meant. If anything happened in consequence, he would teach Dolan a lesson, that was all. The drunken fool! who couldn't keep anything to himself, not even when he was well paid for it. "He'll never get another five dollars out of me," Luck said to himself. But here was the foreigner at his elbow, bowing and apologizing. "No, I've got nothing more to say," he told Herr Emil, curtly. "You and Ditton know a heap more than I do, and I'll give up to you." He laughed in a disagreeable way, and turned his back upon the protesting visitor.

"*Dummkopf!*" muttered Herr Emil, with a sudden malicious glance. Then he turned to the expectant audience at the tables with an extremely confidential smile. "I tell you somethings you vill be glad to hear," he said. "It ees a badt place vare I come from—ven you hear how badt you vill tink keeling too goot for dem." With this preface Herr Emil launched forth into a vivid description of the evils which poverty had to endure under the crushing dominion of the Hapsburgs—the tyrants, he told his hearers, against whom the good Kossuth had fought in vain. Even Luck began to look a little less surly. This was the right kind of talk, he told himself; and he kept wondering more and more who this foreigner was, and why Dolan had brought him here. And yet Luck's attitude was one of suspicion. Any man who was in with Baretta ought to be watched pretty closely. That was a point which had not occurred to him before, but the more he reflected upon it the more reasonable it seemed. Yes, that was it; there was some scheme on foot, and this crafty old fox was working in Baretta's interest. What a fool Dolan was! and what a fool he himself

had been to trust Dolan! He scarcely heard Herr Emil's denunciations of Austrian tyranny for thinking of this.

"*Eh, bien!*" Herr Emil exclaimed at last, "it ees a leetle history I vas veeshing to tell you, my frendts—a history zat makes my heart bleedt. It vas a young man—oh, a fine young man!—who took up der pattle of der poor against der reech. He come to meetings—he say goot vorts—how he die for his brethren in der great fight for Freiheit. *Mon Dieu!* how he talk! Some of you know such a young man, eh?"

Luck caught this last question, and as the speaker paused called out, "Well, I guess there's one young man I know—and what he's up to."

"So?" asked Herr Emil, in no wise disconcerted. "Ve come to dat, Monsieur Stefe-Luck, ve come to dat."

"Who the devil are you?" cried Luck, jumping up, "and what do you call me that for?"

"Oh, you vill see who I am," said Herr Emil. By this time everybody in the room, suspecting that something unusual was to come, was keenly interested. The hum of conversation had entirely died away. Men even forgot to drain their glasses as they leaned forward with a hand behind one ear, so as not to lose a syllable. Ditton, who had not paid any especial heed to the earlier part of the harangue, was now gazing steadily at the speaker, his eyes sparkling under his knitted black brows. As for Dolan, who had indirectly been the cause of Herr Emil's appearance, he sat tilted back against the wall in open-mouthed amazement. "The cheek of the dommed furriner!" he muttered once or twice. Wouldn't Luck give it to him if he knew!

"You vill see who I am," repeated Herr Emil, looking around upon his audience with a pleased smile. "Monsieur Stefe-Luck will be gladt vy I came. *Eh, bien!* I ask, some of you know such a young man. He tell you how great a frendt of yours he vas; den he leaf you for der reech, der svells. Eh? eh? And he knock down der good fader of Mees Maudt. Oh, yes—you know der Herr Baron Smolzow—you know Herr Baretta. And he vas a traitor—a tam traitor; I tell you dat!"

Luck sprang to his feet again with an oath. "You're right

there!" he cried, "and him to call me a scoundrel! What is it you know of Baretta? Why do you call him a traitor? He's all that fast enough, damn him! but what do you know about it? and why do you come here to tell us? Oh, you needn't play any of your foreign tricks on me. I know you—you're his pal; you're up to some plant, and you've come here to spy upon us. Men," cried Luck, turning to the now excited crowd, "why don't you chuck the dirty foreigner out?"

"I guess we had about enough of that sort of talk from you, Luck, once before," said Ditton, coolly, but with an air of authority which no one ventured to dispute this time. On that other occasion, when they had followed Luck's lead, instead of Ditton's, the result had not been altogether satisfactory, the disturbance having very nearly cost them this extremely comfortable meeting place. Consequently there was laughter and applause when Ditton spoke, and several cries of "That's so!" and "You bet!"

But Herr Emil, who still had his revolver in his pocket, had not been greatly alarmed by Luck's threat. "Monsieur Stefe-Luck," he said, smiling, "you mistake. I am no friend to that tam Baretta. I come here"—and his smile became vindictively malicious as he spoke—"to tell you all vat tings he do. He say he vas Baron Smolzow—he leaf you and go into der fine houses, vare he lif like a brince, and trink der wein and eat of goot tings. He haf a story in de papers—oh, you see it! Baron Smolzow! he is no baron—he is a fraudt, a sheat, a low scamp, who tries to steal der fine landts and goots of a great house! He a Smolzow! Pah! it makes me seeek! Vy don't you show him up? Vy not tell de papers about it? Everytings is goot for de papers in America."

"Yes, show him up—put it in the papers!" cried several men. But in truth the most of Herr Emil's listeners had a very vague idea of the nature of the charge against Baretta. They had expected some great sensation, and they now felt that they had been deluded. They cared very little for Baretta's defection, anyway. They understood that he had got some money somehow and called himself a baron. But what concern was that of theirs? Most of them had never liked him, and so had

felt that they were well rid of him. "Is that all it is?" said one to another.

Herr Emil's story, however, had rather more interest for Ditton and for Luck, and before the evening was over he had given them a number of interesting details, and had told the circumstances of the rise of Baron Smolzow more coherently. "I am sadly disappointed in that young man," was Ditton's comment; and that was all which he would say. But Luck, when the meeting broke up, insisted that Herr Emil and Mr. Dolan should come with him to a quiet little place that he knew of, where they could sit and drink as late as they pleased. "I guess we'll want to talk matters over," Luck said; "and I hope you'll take no offence, Mr. Emil, at anything I said before I knew who you were."

"*Eh, bien!* Monsieur Stefe-Luck," cried Herr Emil, gayly. "Ve are all frendts now, *nicht wahr?*"

This friendship was pledged so deeply that Herr Emil came home with an unsteady step, but he had learned to take such incidents philosophically, and knew how to get to bed almost as softly as if he were sober. Thus his son slept on undisturbed, although the fond father went to the bedroom door once or twice and amused himself by shaking his fist at the unconscious young man. "The tam ungrateful fool!" he muttered.

It was not until nearly noon of the next day that Herr Emil had an opportunity to speak to the Baron, although there was one most important matter he wished to impart. The Baron had dressed and gone out when his confidential adviser arose, a little after nine, and thoughtfully munched his toast and drank his coffee; he had a way of taking his simple breakfast, sent up from the lower regions when he rang for it, quite without ceremony, in the easy costume of a long bath-robe. "*Eh, bien!*" said Herr Emil, thoughtfully. "There vill be der teffel to pay." The idea evidently amused him, for he grinned several times and said once more, "Oh yes—der teffel vill be to pay."

When he had finished his breakfast he proceeded to drag out from the bedroom a good-sized box, covered with leather and stamped with the name Smolzow. This he carefully erased with the aid of a sharp penknife; then he began to pack into the

box various articles of clothing, and certain small objects of value which he selected from time to time after meditative glances around the room. The Baron had carelessly left his very handsome gold watch lying upon his desk, and when Herr Emil saw this he dropped it into his pocket, murmuring, "He ees a careless young man!" with a smile that was blandly benevolent. He unlocked the desk with a key from his own ring, and after hastily rummaging through the contents, found a package of bank-notes and some papers, which he placed in an inner pocket. Then he rang the bell and requested the small boy who answered it to get an expressman at once. Herr Emil contemplated the leather box with a good deal of satisfaction after he had locked it, and strapped it tightly, and while he was waiting for the expressman to arrive. "Der teffel vill be to pay," he said once more, shaking his head and smiling.

It was while the box was being carried down the stairs that Baretta came in. "Where are you going now?" he asked his father, curtly.

"Going? Nevare you mind vare I am going. You vill not see me again."

"What!" Baretta cried, a little agitated in spite of himself at this unexpected declaration. "You are going, and not coming back?"

"Vy should I come back? You defy me—you cast me off; you say I can go to the teffel for vat you care. You make a tam fool of yourself about Maudt. Pah! I am seeck and tired of it. I go—forevare." Then Herr Emil pointed dramatically towards the open door, through which his box was at that moment disappearing. "I go—oh yes; but you vill hear from me." He burst into a laugh, which, somehow, seemed to mock the young man who stood gazing at him. "You vill hear from me, François." He touched his fingers to his lips, and gayly blew a kiss. "Oh, it ees a grief to both of us, *nicht wahr?* Adieu, François." He laughed again, and Baretta heard him humming a tune as he went down the stairs and out into the street.

CHAPTER XXX

A FRUITLESS MISSION

Two days after this, Yates, coming out of the Pilgrim Club, met one of the young men employed upon the *Mail* with whom he had a slight acquaintance. He had been thinking rather gloomily of his promise to Daisy Tredwell. What was there that he could do? If Mildred really cared for Baretta, why should any one interfere? After all, there was nothing but suspicion against him, and suspicion was a dangerous guide in such a case. To say that he was not a gentleman was an argument which one would be rather ashamed to urge. In these days of social equality—that, at any rate, was what we called them—it was really no argument at all. And yet if it were a question of saving Mildred from future unhappiness, what would he not do?

"I'm working up something that ought to interest you," said young Parker. "Walk along over the hill with me, and I'll tell you all about it."

"Some new sensation, I dare say," observed Philip, languidly, obeying this injunction, nevertheless. "You fellows are always knocking down some one's house of cards."

"Ah, but it's a whole castle this time. See here, Mr. Yates, if I give you a hint, you must keep it quite to yourself. I want to scoop the town on this story."

"Oh, well, why trust me at all?"

"Perhaps you'll see why when I tell you whose castle it is. Have you heard," young Parker asked, looking at him suddenly, "of the ancestral estates at Bataszek?"

"What do you mean?" Philip asked.

"Oh!" said Parker, with a laugh. "I see you have heard of

them. Well, I should say the prospect was that they would go to the next of kin. Baron Smolzow is likely to find it extremely inconvenient to push his claim. It's rather rough on him, for I hear that he's been cutting a pretty wide swath of late."

"Baron Smolzow? Then he has no right to the title at all?"

"That's about what it means. Oh, it's quite a story. They'll read the *Mail* on the Back Bay the morning it comes out. Why, Mr. Yates, the man is a swindler. That precious secretary of his is his real father—he's no more a baron than I am. There undoubtedly was a Paul Baretta who came to this country, and that fellow Emil fell in with him somehow and got his papers. But the Baron, as he calls himself, is Emil's own son."

To say that Philip was astounded by this piece of news would be to put it mildly. He had suspected Baretta all along, and yet the truth was a shock to him. "Are you sure of this?" he asked, at last. "It would be an outrageous thing to print such a story unless you were sure."

"Sure? Oh, don't you worry about that. Emil himself has given the business away. I can't see why he did it, but that's of small consequence. The worst of it is that Emil can't be found. But there's no doubt as to his confession. I have several witnesses who can swear to that."

"Who are they? How did you know of it?"

"Well, really, Mr. Yates, you'll have to excuse me. I couldn't tell you that; I couldn't, indeed. I got a clew two days ago from a fellow named Luck—one of those agitators that I understand Baretta used to be in with—and I've been following it up ever since in various ways. Of course," Parker added, in a rather embarrassed fashion, "there's a good deal of back-stairs gossip about it, but it doesn't do for us newspaper men to be too particular. But, I say," he went on, "if you could spare me half an hour, and let me read you my notes—"

"Oh, I won't have anything to do with it," said Philip, promptly.

"But he was a friend of yours—at least you knew him," Parker said. "And the thing is bound to make such a sensation, don't you know, that I would like to be sure my story is as nearly correct as possible. You see, they've been lionizing him

a good deal. And then that paragraph in the *Weekly Packet* this morning about his engagement to Sibley Lawrence's daughter—"

"What!" cried Philip, angrily. "How dare you mention her name in such a connection?"

"See here, Mr. Yates," said Parker, looking aggrieved, "you're rather unjust. I'm merely telling you what I saw in the *Packet*. I don't say it's true."

"True? No, of course it isn't true. Don't put that in your story."

"Well, of course, if it's any favour to you—" Parker began, reluctantly.

True? Philip was saying to himself. How could it, oh, how could it be true? Yet some wretched scribbler had published the idle tale, and all the city would be talking about it. Such a thing would have been bad enough in any case, but to have it happen now, to have her name mixed up with this vulgar scandal—that was worst of all. "Why not suppress the whole story?" said Philip. "Come to my rooms—they're near by, in Livingstone Place—and talk the matter over."

"Suppress the whole story!" exclaimed the reporter, rather irritably. "I dare say that seems to you to be a very small thing; but I have my living to make, and it's worth everything to me to get a scoop like this. Of course," he added, diplomatically, reflecting that, after all, Yates might have something of interest to say, or might at least make some unconscious confessions which would be of use to him, "I shall be very glad to spare a few minutes, if you wish."

But no amount of talking it over could sway Parker from his determination to give the readers of the *Mail* this choice morsel of gossip. The most that he would do was to promise Yates to let him know just when the story would be published. "I must look out that none of the other fellows get ahead of me," Parker explained, "and I may have to spring it pretty suddenly, but I will give you what notice I can. And I won't say anything about Miss Lawrence—although I have an interview here with the Lawrences' coachman, and with the grocer's boy who's keeping company with one of the house-maids. You

needn't look as if you'd like to murder me ; it's what we fellows have to do if we want to keep up with the procession."

"In that case," said Philip, repressing as well as he could the indignation which he felt, "I think I'd stay behind."

Young Parker slipped his note-book into his pocket as he rose, and laughed pleasantly. "Don't be too hard on us, Mr. Yates," he said. "A man has a natural prejudice in favour of making a living, after all. If we all could do as we please, no doubt we'd change a good many things."

Philip thought afterwards that possibly an appeal to the editor himself might be more successful, and he was tempted to see Binney at once. Then he reflected that perhaps he had no right to make any movement in that direction until Parker gave him the word. But meanwhile something must be done. How could he stand by and see this misfortune impending and do nothing? What gave him the most anguish was the thought that the paragraph of which Parker had spoken might be true. Perhaps there might be some entanglement—he could not use the word love without a curious sense of profanation—and Mildred felt bound in honour, if not in inclination, to keep a promise the full significance of which she had not understood. Such a theory might be absurd, but nothing could be so absurd as to suppose that she really cared for the fellow. The preference of the loved one for another is always inexplicable, even to the least vain of men.

No doubt it was folly to go to Baretta himself, but this it was which Philip at last determined to do. Surely if the story were false it was only fair to give the victim of it some warning. There would be no treachery to Parker in that. But if it were true? He hardly dared ask what he should do in that case, so menacing were the possibilities that loomed up in his imagination. The only thing that was clear in his mind was the urgent need of saving Mildred from humiliation. He had no more hope of regaining her love, and if he had he would have been the last man in the world to go this way about it. But at least he would save her from an unworthy lover if he could. He had little confidence that Baretta would be able to make an effective denial. Upon what ground, indeed, could he ask for

any explanation at all? And yet he made up his mind to go to Baretta. There was nothing else left for him to do. He waited until evening, and then went to the rooms in Huntington Avenue.

"Oh, Yates, is it you?" Baretta said, nonchalantly, rising to receive his visitor. "I began to think that you intended to cut me."

"I hope it won't come to that," said Philip, gravely.

"Take off your coat, Yates. I don't smoke, so I can't offer you a cigar; but if you have one of your own, pray make yourself quite at home. You'll find this a comfortable chair. How do you like my quarters, eh?" Baretta asked, with an air of condescension that ignored the time when he had lived in a single shabby room in Arragon Street. Yates had never visited him there, but he had known him in his days of poverty, and it was desirable to impress him with a consciousness of the completeness of the change. "I'm a little put out this evening," continued Baretta, "because my man left me very suddenly day before yesterday, and I haven't yet found anybody to take his place. Those fellows are an ungrateful lot. I had done everything for him, and so had my father, while he was alive. You're looking rather pale, ain't you? I hope nothing's the matter."

"Oh no; I am perfectly well. See here, Baretta"—Philip burst forth. Then the embarrassment of the situation overwhelmed him and he stopped short and turned away.

"I prefer to be called by—by my proper title," said Baretta, rather curtly. "Of course in an old acquaintance the other name is quite pardonable." He was wondering what in the world Yates had to say to him, and why he was so reluctant to say it. He did not for a moment suspect the real cause of his visit. He had not thought of his father's parting words as a threat, and the feeling of relief at being rid of an extremely annoying companion had made him positively light-hearted. The one cloud in his sky was his promise to marry Maud. He had no intention of breaking it, but still it was hard to give up his aspirations to the hand of Miss Lawrence. And it would not be so easy as he thought, after having tasted the sweets of social adulation, to go back to the old life of inconspicuous labour

for the good of mankind. What he was anxious to do was to devise some way of marrying Maud and still retaining his position as Baron Smolzow. It could not be, he argued, that all those papers which he had in his possession were worthless. His father had said that, trying to frighten him. But he was no such fool. "Oh yes, indeed," he said to Yates, "it seems very queer to be called anything but Baron Smolzow."

"This is no time for titles—or anything else," Philip retorted, brusquely. "I—I beg your pardon," he went on, "but there's no use beating about the bush. A very queer story—about you—came to my knowledge to-day, and I'm going to ask you frankly whether it's true. Perhaps I need not add that I expect you to answer me frankly."

Baretta turned very pale. A queer story! What could it be but the one story which he had hoped would never be known? The moment of danger had taken him unawares, in spite of his knowledge that his father had proclaimed the truth before Maud and Dolan. But what had that amounted to? Maud would never betray him, and Dolan was too stupid to understand the meaning of the declaration. Now for the first time the possible significance of his father's departure occurred to him. "I guess—I don't exactly understand you," he said at last.

"I don't want to offend you, but when I tell you what the story is you will see that it is a kindness to give you the chance to deny it. I cannot tell you how it reached me. But it is likely to appear in the newspapers at any moment; and, false or true, you ought to know of it."

"Yes? Well, if you would tell me what the story is," said Baretta, rather irritably, "perhaps I might be able to judge. I don't say I'll answer any impertinent question you may feel inclined to ask," he added. "I don't recognize your right to ask any questions at all—understand that."

"You are taking a very unfortunate tone," Yates said. "I make no demands—I simply tell you that it is for your interest to answer one question. What right have you to the title of Baron Smolzow?"

"What right? Every right. But I won't talk about it—to you!" Baretta cried. He knew now well enough what story

it was that Yates had heard, but he would not betray the terror which he felt.

"Oh, very well—that is for you to decide. I didn't come in any hostile spirit. I should be glad to know that you could defend yourself against the charges that are to be brought against you."

"Charges? Whose charges? Let them try to prove that I am no baron. I have the papers—do you hear me?—I have the papers. But what is the use of talking to you about it? You know perfectly well that this is some trick—got up, I suppose, by that man of mine whom I discharged for his cursed impertinence. And don't you think that I don't know why you came to me with this silly bugbear?" Baretta exclaimed, angrily. "Oh, I'm not quite such a fool as that. You've always hated me—don't deny it!—ever since I began to get on in the world. You wanted me to be a poor devil that you could patronize. Why, damn you, do you suppose I was such a fool as not to see that? You to patronize me—a fellow with nothing but your money—and your notion that you were a little better than anybody else! Oh yes! I laughed at you even while I was poor and unknown. And I got the better of you—I can go to houses where they would show you the door. Oh, you know that, do you? To Miss Lawrence's house, who wouldn't look at you—Miss Lawrence—"

"You cad! You cur!" To hear Baretta bring Mildred's name into the dispute in this way filled Philip with a sudden fury. "By Heaven—"

"Cur!" shrieked Baretta. He picked up a sharp steel paper-knife, which happened to be the object nearest to his hand, and hurled it at Philip's head. It missed the mark, however, and, whizzing by, struck a picture on the wall, shattering the glass into fragments. Before he could repeat the attack Philip had rushed forward and seized him by the arms, pinioning him securely.

"Let me alone! let me alone!" Baretta plunged wildly, but he was no match in strength for Yates. Finally he yielded and made no further effort to escape. "What are you going to do with me?" he asked, in a husky voice.

"Well," said Philip, "I think you ought to be dropped out of the window." His easy victory had disposed him to be generous, and he was already regretting that he had lost his temper, great though the provocation had been. "But I hope it won't quite come to murder." Then he released Baretta, and stepping back, picked up his hat.

"Murder!" Baretta cried, glaring at him. "Oh, well, murder would serve some people just about right. See here," he cried, as Philip moved towards the door, "what did you call me cur for? If it hadn't been for that I wouldn't have lost my temper so."

"Indeed! Well, I'm afraid that I can hardly explain—or apologize. I see very clearly, however, that there is no use in prolonging this interview. I came to you to do you a good turn, although you may not think so. Now, let the whole thing come out; I wash my hands of all interference."

"But, see here! What is the whole thing? You haven't told me yet. I think you are treating me very unfairly—to come here with tales about my being no baron at all, and then give me no chance to defend myself. If you hope to slander me to others—"

"I have said nothing to any one—I shall say nothing only to one person."

"And that is—who?"

"Pardon me, but I decline to answer. If you had told me that this story of that fellow Emil's—I believe you call him that—was false, and given me some reason to think so, no one would have been more willing than I to help you. I admit that I have never believed you to be Baron Smolzow or anything else, but at least I have kept my mouth shut about it. Now I shall take such measures to—to protect others as I think best. I tell you once more that this is a serious matter, and that it will be made public—I can't tell when; perhaps to-morrow, for all I know—unless you can in some way fully establish your claim and refute the assertions of the man who says he is your father. I don't doubt but that you will have the chance, for the editor of the paper which has the facts is an honourable man. And that," said Philip, with his hand on the knob, "is all I have to say to you!"

What folly it had been to go to Baretta at all! This was what Philip was thinking as he came away. He no longer had any doubt of the truth of the revelations which Parker was "working up" for the *Mail*: perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he had never had any doubt at all. He reproached himself with his error in letting Baretta see that. He might have accomplished his mission if he had been politic. What a fool a man was to lose his temper! Philip felt somehow as if he had put himself on Baretta's level by that sudden outburst of wrath. There was no excuse, after all, for calling even this low-born adventurer a cad and a cur. But the impudence with which he had vaunted his intimacy with the Lawrences had been simply maddening. "I really believe the fellow is more than half crazy," Philip said to himself. Certainly there had been murder in his heart when he hurled the knife at Philip's head. Philip was no coward, but nevertheless he could not repress a shudder when he recalled Baretta's wild white face and glaring dilated eyes. It reminded him of the beast of prey about to spring upon his victim. Then he tried to laugh this impression away.

But the task which he had undertaken was by no means a light one. He had failed to get Baretta to admit anything, to promise to abandon his pretensions and leave the city. This was what he had hoped to do when he made his appeal to him. Surely that would have been the best thing for everybody. Now, however, there was no hope of that. He must save Mildred, if he was to save her, in some other way. But what other way was there? He could think of only one, and that was to go to Daisy Tredwell with the story. Under ordinary circumstances he would have shrunk from doing this. It seemed to him to be a mean act, unworthy of a gentleman. And yet Baretta's own conduct had left him no alternative. He could not stand by and see Mildred involved in the impending catastrophe simply because he was reluctant to tell the truth about a swindler and adventurer. He would not recognize the fact that his feeling of rivalry with Baretta—a feeling which he had been forced in the past to admit, hateful as the notion was—had anything to do with this reluctance. It was altogether ab-

surd to think about rivalry at all. Nothing could be more clear than that he had given up all hopes of a reconciliation with the woman whom he loved. If he interfered now it was because he still wished to save her from unhappiness, however unhappy he himself might be. She had not been generous to him, but he would be generous to her. After all, perhaps she had never really loved him. He was a fool to waste the best years of his life in regretting what was irremediable. He would forget an episode that was best forgotten. It was not the first time that he had formed this resolution only to break it. But now he had quite made up his mind. Perhaps what he really needed was a change of scene. When once he had rescued Mildred from the dangers that threatened he would go away, and then all that happened would be like some bad dream that a new dawn dispels. He was sure that Daisy, who had tried to help him, would say that this was wise. Daisy had insisted that Mildred still cared for him; but that was absurd; how could she know? Nevertheless, he was very grateful. There was one person in the world, at least, who understood him, who sympathized with him. He had never thought of such a thing as falling in love with her, but now he vaguely wondered if in that case he might not have been happier. It was an idle fancy, of course; why should he be thinking of falling in love at all? He was a man past the first flush of youth, and why should he be mooning like a school-boy over any girl? To marry Daisy Tredwell! the idea was quite too absurd. He was in no mood to marry anybody. He had dreamed his dream, and it was over, and now let him face life as it was, untinted by the false glow of sentiment. But he must save Mildred; so much, at least, should be done for the sake of an unreal and delusive past. And Daisy, who was so kind and true, whose volatile nature could not conceal a warm and tender heart, would help him. Had she not already made a piteous appeal to him to do his utmost for Mildred's sake? Yes—it was to Daisy that he must go now for counsel.

CHAPTER XXXI

MAUD BECOMES ALARMED

"WHAT has happened? Oh, Frank, tell me what it is!" Maud cried. She hurried to meet him with a vague foreboding of evil; his face was pale and haggard, and there was a feverish brightness in his eyes. "Oh, Frank, I hope you ain't going to be sick! You don't know how dreadful you look."

"It's foolish for you to leave this place. Can't you get along without having rows?" asked Baretta, brusquely. "There's nothing the matter with me—it's only your imagination. That woman down-stairs is insolent, but still you might get along with her."

"I am leaving to-morrow, Frank. You wouldn't want me to stay, would you, after she had talked to me as she did? The idea of her saying I wasn't respectable! She's no lady, and I told her that myself. But, Frank, you must be ill. You're as white as a sheet and—for Heaven's sake, don't sit there rolling your eyes at me like that! You make me nervous."

"Nonsense!" retorted Baretta, rising and walking up and down the little room, like a wild animal pacing its narrow cage. "I have a lot to think of, that's all. Oh yes, a lot to think of. But you'd better have stayed here—at least, for a time. There's never any telling what may happen."

"I don't know what you mean," Maud said. His manner alarmed her. She was sure that he must be ill in spite of his denials; or perhaps some fit of sickness was coming on—she had heard that people talked and acted strangely in such cases.

"You don't know!" cried the young man, with a sneer, stopping and facing her. "Well, there's a good deal you don't

know—that nobody knows. And they never will know!" Baretta exclaimed. "Let him do his worst? I tell you, Maud, I defy him to do his worst. What do I care now? But, Maud," he went on, "don't you join the gang that's working against me. By Heaven, if you did, I believe I'd kill you!"

"Frank! Frank! do you know what you're saying? Oh, Frank, you must be sick! I guess I'd better get a doctor for you."

"Doctor be damned! See here, Maud, if you can't talk sensibly to me, I might as well go. I thought you'd help me against them. But there it is—you're on their side, too. You're ready to go back on me like the rest of them. You'll believe anything a worthless scamp that I turned out of doors says, but you won't believe me. Good God!" he cried, suddenly, throwing himself heavily into a chair, and bursting into tears, "how I've been deceived in you, Maud!"

Oh, what should she do? poor Maud asked herself. He was out of his head, he was going to be dangerously ill, and what should she do? She dared not leave him alone, and there was nobody whom she could call upon for help. And even if she had been on friendly terms with Mrs. Jackson, Baretta would undoubtedly have resented the intrusion of a stranger. All that was left to her was to try in some way to quiet him. "I guess you'll be more comfortable if you lay down on the bed, Frank," she said, soothingly. "I ain't deceiving you, dear, and I know you don't mean that. You've been working too hard, or sitting up late or something."

"I'm as well as you are," Baretta said, looking up angrily.

"Well, there's a difference between being tired and being sick, and I guess you're only tired. You lay down, anyway."

Baretta staggered to his feet and drew one hand slowly across his forehead. "It aches like the very devil," he said. "What was it I was talking about, anyway? It's good of you, Maud—I love you more than ever. You'd think I loved you if you knew what had happened—and all because of that. Do you know, Maud," he went on with a strange laugh, "I almost hit him with that paper-knife. It was a close call for him. No, I won't lie down—let me alone! I tell you I won't! You're

mighty good to me, though, Maud; I'll do anything for you."

"Yes, dear, but just lay down a minute to rest your head."

"Well, you give me a kiss and I will. Ah!" sighed Baretta as he fell back on the pillow. "You're the only friend I have in the world, Maud; and I'm going to marry you—don't you forget that. But I'll have my revenge on her along with the rest of them."

"Yes, dear." Maud turned away to hide the tears that were running down her face, the while she stroked his forehead gently, in the hope of quieting him. This was the worst blow of all. It must be something serious when he was out of his head. He had always talked a good deal about his enemies; but this was mere incoherence—about throwing knives and revenge upon "her." Why should he wish to be revenged upon Miss Lawrence, of all people, whom he had always admired so much, and of whom even yet Maud could not help feeling bitterly jealous? Oh, it must be that he did not know at all what he was saying! Maud kept on stroking his forehead, while he muttered vague imprecations, so indistinctly that she could not understand what he said. And then, after one or two convulsive tremours, he was silent, lying staring at the ceiling, apparently oblivious of her presence. She was very much frightened; he had such a ghastly look; his upturned face was like the face of one dead. But she would not leave him while her presence seemed to soothe him; she felt that it was wiser to stay than to hurry away after a doctor. He reached out after a time and took her free hand in his; and thus presently he fell asleep.

Maud arose, withdrawing her hand gently, so as not to wake him, and tiptoed to the door. A clock in the dim silence below suddenly struck the hour. Maud heard it with a start. Ten o'clock! and what could she do as late as this? She could not rouse him and send him away; she could not stay alone watching him. She peered over the rail of the landing and saw that an oil-lamp was still burning in the entry below. Then she crept down-stairs and knocked at the door of the untidy room which Mrs. Jackson called her parlour.

"Hullo!" Mr. Jackson said, coming to the door in his shirt-

sleeves. "What's the row? You look as if you'd seen a ghost." He took her hand in his and squeezed it with the amiable intention of reassuring her.

"I want to see Mrs. Jackson," said Maud, snatching her hand away.

"Well, you can't," came the voice of that worthy woman from within. "I'm jest beat out, and ready to go to bed, and nothin' on but a wrapper."

"I tell you I must speak to you!" cried Maud, desperately. Then she burst into tears. "Oh, Mr. Jackson!" she cried, "won't you go for a doctor, or something? Mr. Baretta's dreadfully sick. He was out of his head when he came, and I've just made him lay down and got him off to sleep. Oh, I must have a doctor—I'm scared to death."

"Why, of course I'll go," Mr. Jackson said. "Don't you cry." He was not a bad man in his way, in spite of his inclination towards unwelcome gallantries, and he patted Maud reassuringly on the shoulder as he spoke. It was unfortunate, however—Mr. Jackson's intentions being in this case quite innocent—that Mrs. Jackson should at this very moment come to the door.

"You mis'ble hussy!" she shrieked, visiting her wrath upon the victim of her husband's affectionate disposition, and not upon the offender. "I'll teach yer to play yer tricks! Yah!" With a sudden snarl like a cat, the angry woman threw herself, both claws extended, upon Maud. But Mr. Jackson, who had seen her in such humours before—when the bottle of gin which she kept in a cupboard had been rather rapidly lowered, such being this virtuous woman's one failing—grasped her wrists so quickly that the object of the assault, which was to injure the beauty of a suspected rival, was not attained in this case.

"Just go back up-stairs," said Mr. Jackson, "and I'll get the doctor for you in a few minutes. She has these tantrums about once in so often. Don't you mind her," he added, taking a firmer hold, and raising his wife's arms to such a height that her nails could not be used as weapons upon him; "she'll forget all about it by morning." He thrust her back, still struggling, then closed and locked the door.

"What's the trouble?" asked some one coming down the stairs. Maud turned with a quick cry. It was Baretta himself.

"Oh, Frank!" Maud cried. "Go back!"

"Hullo!" Mr. Jackson said. "She's been asking me to go for the doctor for you."

"Doctor! I don't want any doctor," Baretta said, sharply. "How did I come to be lying on your bed?" he added, turning to Maud. "And what's all this row, anyway." For Mrs. Jackson was vigorously thumping on the door and emitting a series of piercing screams.

"Only one of her tantrums," explained Mr. Jackson, grinning. "I guess I'd better tend to her now. She needs a doctor more than him." Mr. Jackson grinned again, leered knowingly at Maud, then unlocked the door and went inside, where his voice could be heard in expostulation with his angry spouse.

"But what's all the row?" repeated Baretta, impatiently. "What are you doing down here, Maud?"

"I—I came to speak to Mrs. Jackson, but she's—well, you see what's she like. But you—are you better? Oh, you hadn't ought to have got up! And you have your hat in your hand. You don't mean to go, do you? Oh, I won't let you go!"

"Won't let me go? What nonsense are you talking now, Maud? Why was I lying up there alone? Was—was anything the matter with me?"

"Oh, well," said Maud, evasively, "you seemed feverish, and—and out of your head—"

"Out of my head!"

"And so I made you lie down, and you fell asleep. But are you sure you are strong enough to go out, Frank?" Maud asked anxiously. "You still look very pale, and if anything should happen—"

"Pooh! what can happen? Oh, well, I dare say I may look a little pale—I have had a good deal to bother me. And that's why I wasn't quite myself, perhaps, when I came. But I know what to do now—I'm all right, and you needn't worry. I'll fight to the last!" he cried. "And you—will you stand by me whatever happens?"

"Oh, Frank! you know that without the asking." She threw

her arms about his neck and kissed him passionately. "You're sure you ain't sick, Frank?"

"Yes, yes—how you women worry! I say, Maud, I shall come to-morrow—or the next day—and tell you all about it. Something's going to happen, but if you stand by me—"

"Frank! Frank! you look as if you were going to do something desperate."

"Nonsense! what a notion! Only they're trying to cheat me out of my rights—to say that I am not Baron Smolzow; think of that, Maud! Would you mind if I were not?"

"Mind! Oh, I think you would be happier to give up everything, and—and—"

"And marry you, Maud," Baretta said, kissing her. "Well, that's what I'm going to do. "Suppose I should come to-morrow and say 'Come off with me now, and we'll leave this place forever—' what would you do?"

"Do? Why, go with you of course! But if I am not here—"

"Well, you must stay here. Oh, you can manage that—what's the difference for only a day or two? And—and don't you go to the store, either. Have you got any money? Here's some—oh, take it, it's only ten dollars—and you may want to buy some things. Take it, I say! We're going to be married right off, and what's the difference? Now you wait, Maud, till you hear from me. Good-bye." Again he held her closely in his arms, and their lips met. "Oh, Maud!" he cried with a strange choking sob, "if anything should happen, remember it was you I loved at the last." He strained her wildly to his bosom; then he suddenly flung open the door and rushed out into the darkness.

"Frank! Frank!" called Maud. But he did not hear her; or if he did he made no response. The sound of his hurrying footsteps grew fainter and fainter as the girl stood listening by the open door. Presently she closed it with a shiver and glided softly up-stairs.

Her mind was full of apprehension—her heart throbbed with a great dread—as she sat alone in her room and recalled all that Frank had said. What was the terrible thing that had happened to him? and why had he come to her looking so wild

and haggard, and talking so strangely, quite out of his head? There was a great deal which she could not understand. She could not help being worried. She felt sure that something very serious was impending. He loved her—she no longer had any doubt of that; he had told her to remember that he loved her at the last. But the phrase frightened her. Why should there be any last, when they were about to be married and never be separated again? And it was so strange to hear him talk about revenging himself upon “her.” He could only mean Miss Lawrence by “her”—Miss Lawrence, whom she was sure he had always worshipped, and of whom she could not yet help being jealous. There was something very strange about it all; and she, who loved him best of any one in the world, was not to be told. It was cruel to keep her in suspense. Maud had only the vaguest idea of the means by which Baretta had become Baron Smolzow, or perhaps his ravings would have been more intelligible to her. She found it natural enough to think of him as a swell. She had always looked upon him as her superior; as far back as the days of his first coming to Arragon Street he had seemed to her to be, in spite of his poverty, far more “genteel” than any other young man she had ever known. To be genteel was in Maud’s opinion the next best thing to being a swell. It was the goal which she hoped to attain when she married Baretta. He was a real gentleman, at any rate, and she felt that she knew how to behave like a real lady. The girls at Brown’s, like the girls in Arragon Street, regarded her as “stuck-up,” which was one characteristic of real ladies. She did not care whether Baretta was the Baron Smolzow or not, because she was so very sure that they would be genteel. She had told him that he would be happier if he gave it all up—a piece of advice which was perhaps founded upon her perception of her own unfitness to be the wife of so exalted a person as a baron, whose position was quite beyond that of gentility. She was not so ignorant as to confuse this obvious distinction. She was familiar with lords and ladies through the novels which she had read, and she knew that she would feel very much out of place if ever she were introduced to their society. She thought that a baron must be a lord, but she was not quite sure. In most of the

novels the barons were foreigners, and also, unfortunately, highly disreputable persons; which was an added reason why she was just as well satisfied that Frank should not be one. Oh yes—she was glad to know that he was angry with all those people who had taken him away from her! and yet she wished that he had not talked about revenge, and throwing knives at people. She knew that he had a furious temper, and she recalled various cases where men with furious tempers had been led to all sorts of dreadful things—even to committing murder. Who could tell what Frank might do when he was in that state—not himself, but altogether out of his head? For a long time that night she lay awake. It had begun to rain, and the heavy drops driving against the windows made her nervous. Oh, where had he gone? and what did he intend to do? Her anxieties came back to her with redoubled force, driving away all those harmless fancies about being genteel, and about lords and barons. Thus poor Maud tossed and turned on a restless pillow, and shed many a bitter tear.

It was daylight before she fell asleep, so that she awoke late in the forenoon. The rain had ceased and the sun was shining brightly in at the window. How late it must be! was her first thought. She jumped out of bed, and ran hastily across the room to look at her alarm-clock, which she had forgotten to wind the night before. It was still ticking feebly. Half-past ten! and what would they say at the store? Then she recalled her promise to Baretta that she would give up the store. Under ordinary circumstances she would have welcomed the opportunity, but now she felt that something to do would be a welcome distraction. However, let it be as he said; he must have his reasons, and he would doubtless explain them to her in good time. But she wished that he had not rushed away telling her half the story, which was so much worse than telling her nothing at all. Why should he want her to wait for him, to be ready to go away with him at any moment? What was he about to do? or what had he done? It was terrible to be left thus a prey to vague anxieties.

"Seems to me you're pretty late," said Mrs. Jackson, when Maud went down-stairs. She poked her head out of the par-

lour door and made this observation. "When are you going to move out?"

"I think I shall stay another week," said Maud. "I ain't anxious to, but we're to be married so soon that Mr. Baretta thinks I'd better."

"Well, I like that!" Mrs. Jackson exclaimed, coming out into the entry, and regarding her lodger with arms defiantly akimbo. "An' you makin' up to my man the way you do!"

"It's a lie! He makes up to me. But I won't endure it. I hate him! And I'm glad to get out of your house, and I'd go this moment if I could. But I promised Frank to stay, and I will stay. I guess you won't try to put me out."

"Oh, you're a high-flyer and no mistake!" Mrs. Jackson said, sarcastically. "Comin' here with your airs, and too good to say a word to any one. Maud Vivian! do you s'pose I didn't know all the time you was lyin' to me? Such goin's-on in a decent woman's house—and furriners comin' and askin' after ye, and a great dirty Irishman calling you his girl. What does it all mean, I'd like to know? And so you'll stay, will you? Well, the rent's gone up. It's two dollars I want, and you can just pay over the money now or it's in the street you'll be."

"Two dollars! here's your old two dollars!" said Maud, taking out one of the bills which Baretta had given her.

"Oh, you're rollin' in money, ain't you? Well, out of my house you go a week from to-day, or it'll be four dollars. I told you when you come that I wouldn't have anything to do with any one but a decent girl."

"How dare you talk to me like that!" Maud flashed out angrily. "I told you my father had treated me badly, and you blame me because he found me out and made a row. Decent? I guess I'm as decent as a woman that gets drunk." And with this parting shot Maud hurried away.

Mrs. Jackson stood for a moment quite dazed by this attack; then she went back into her parlour, slamming the door furiously. "The jade!" she muttered. She was naturally a kind-hearted woman, except during her "spells," or when she was recovering from the effects of one, and under ordinary circumstances she would have treated Maud with more consideration.

Now she was wishing that she had not taken the two dollars, so that she might have had the pleasure of dumping all of poor Maud's scanty belongings in the street. "She'll go next week, sure," Mrs. Jackson said, rattling angrily at the air-tight stove which she was replenishing with coals. "I wouldn't have her for forty dollars."

Maud, for her part, was wishing that Frank had not made her promise to stay. How she hated the woman, who treated her so meanly, and all for nothing at all, except that she was jealous of her worthless husband! "As if I'd have anything to do with the likes of him!" Maud said to herself. However, she soon gave over thinking about Mrs. Jackson in her absorption in more important matters. She took a car down-town—she felt rich with ten dollars in her shabby little purse—and went to the store to tell them that she was going to leave.

"Oh, you'll catch it!" Dolly said, grinning amiably, when Maud walked in. "Foxy's down on you now, because you won't have nothing to say to him."

"Well, let him be; I'm going to leave, anyway. I'm going to be married," Maud added, with a touch of conscious pride.

"Married? I didn't think you was such a big fool. Oh yes, we have some that comes cheaper," she said, condescendingly, turning to a customer.

But Mr. Thomas B. Fox didn't seem to care in the least whether Brown's lost the services of Miss Vivian or not. He heard her story with an indifferent air. "You can come round and get half a week's pay on Saturday," he said, gruffly. "We don't like to have girls leave us in this sort of way—I presume they'd make a row if we bounced them without notice. But I saw some time ago you wouldn't do, so it's just as well."

"Wouldn't do?" cried Maud, glad to be released, and yet indignant at this aspersion upon her capacity. "I guess I've worked hard enough."

"Oh, you've worked hard enough," said Mr. Fox, with a sneer. "I suppose you've found some one now who won't let you work."

"Yes!" Maud said, with an angry look. "The man I'm going to marry. And now that I'm going, I'll tell you that you are a

—a dirty loafer!" cried Maud, relapsing into the dialect of Aragon Street. And then she rushed away from Mr. Fox and Brown's like a miniature whirlwind. They could keep their miserable two dollars! she would never go back there any more.

But it was ill waiting for Frank with nothing to do, nothing to occupy her thoughts. She kept very closely to that dingy room, in anxious expectation of the coming of her lover to take her away forever. Her mind was full of miserable forebodings. She dwelt upon his random words, but she could not understand them at all; she had only a conviction that something was wrong, that a crisis was at hand for both. Oh, why did not Frank come to explain? What could it be that was keeping him away so long? On the afternoon of the third day she could stand it no longer, but walked over to Baretta's rooms in Huntington Avenue to find some answer to her questions. It must be that he was really ill—out of his head again, perhaps, with no one by to take care of him. Her heart was beating violently when she rang the bell.

"Lor', miss," said the man who came to the door, "the Baron ain't been here these two days. He packed up and went off without telling a blessed soul where he was goin'. I don't know—I wish I did," he added, dryly.

CHAPTER XXXII

A DESPERATE HOPE

BARETTA had told his father that he was sick of acting a lie, and had defied him to do his worst; and yet when the blow came it completely overwhelmed him. The reality too often differs widely from the anticipation. It seemed an easy thing to do to resolve to give up his ambitions, to become a nobody again and marry Maud; but when he no longer had any choice he felt that he had chosen ill. What a fool he had been! and all because a girl had cried and fainted in his arms. He chose to attribute his defiance of his father wholly to Maud, although even before she had come back to remind him of the past his position had grown extremely irksome. His father's presence had made all the difference in the world. What would the winning of Miss Lawrence do to rid him of that? And there had been so many humiliations, so many petty anxieties! "Nought's had, all's spent, when our desire is got without content," he might have said, had he been more familiar with the greatest of dramatists.

When Yates left him, Baretta buried his face in his hands and groaned aloud. Yes—the blow had fallen, and he was beginning to realize how heavy it would be. The man who hated him most, who had been against him from the first, was the first to know the truth; and he had come to threaten him, and no doubt to exult over him. It was some satisfaction to recall that he had told him nothing, that he had defied him to do his worst. And now how was he to have his revenge? It was against Yates that his anger burned hottest. His father seemed to be beyond his reach; but Yates was where he could reach him and strike

him down. And he would do it; he would get even with him in some way. He could not think of a way just yet, but that would come later. He did not doubt that Yates was concerned in the ruin which was preparing for him. How else would he have known about it? Hypocritical expressions of regret did not deceive him in the least; the fellow had shown himself in his true colours when he called him a cad and a cur. Baretta's wrath blazed up anew as he remembered these epithets. And now Yates would go to Miss Lawrence and tell her all, exulting over the rival whom he hated. There was no suspicion in his mind that a gentleman would be incapable of this; it was precisely what he would have done himself under similar circumstances. And she would believe it—oh yes, he was sure of that. She was not like Maud, who had clung to him in spite of everything. He would make it up to Maud—the only friend he had in the world. And yet he could not help remembering that but for her his secret might still have been safe. What a fool he had been! and the only thing left was to make the best of his folly.

He rose after a time and began to walk up and down the room, determined in one way or another to come to a clearer understanding of the situation, to see if there were not yet some chance of saving himself. This dull mechanic exercise might perhaps help him to think. But what was there that he could do? He was utterly in the dark as to the manner in which the story had reached Yates. It was to come out in a newspaper, Yates had said, and of course he himself had gone to the editor with it. That was just what a jealous rival would be sure to do. He remembered now that he once or twice mentioned Yates to his father, and had even angrily told him that he ought to go to Yates with his revelations. But of course it was impossible that his father could have done this. He knew nothing of the young man, and had probably forgotten the name. Everything, however, was to come out in the papers; that was undoubtedly true; the papers would publish eagerly a sensation so fertile as this. It was too late to do anything now. But was it too late? If he only knew what paper it was. The editor was an honourable man, Yates had said. The *Mail*—Binney! why hadn't he

thought of this obvious answer to his question before? It was the *Mail* for which Yates had written, and Binney was a friend of his. He saw the whole plot now. They had talked it all over at the club, and now Yates was writing the sensational article that must blast his career forever. Oh, the plot was only too plain! How dull he must have been not to suspect it at once! His course was clear enough. He would go to Binney and deny the whole outrageous accusation. It was a desperate hope, but it was the only one he had left, and he must save himself in some way. He had defied his father to do his worst, and he had tried to persuade himself that when once he had abandoned all his aspirations and had married Maud and gone away somewhere, to a place where no one knew him, he would not care what happened. But now that everything was slipping away from him, he realized how bitter the change would be. And Miss Lawrence would despise him! That was worst of all. Was it indeed she that he loved, or only Maud?

He remembered that Mr. Binney did not like to see callers in the evening, but his errand was too important to be postponed. Delay might be fatal; perhaps the story was already prepared for the consumption of an avid public. Somewhat to his surprise, he was admitted to the inner room at once.

"I was going to send one of our young men up to see you," said Mr. Binney, nodding rather curtly as Baretta entered.

"It—it was something important?" stammered the young man, although he knew very well what it was.

The editor fumbled among the papers on his desk a moment, and then drew out two long printed slips. "If you'll step into the other room and read that, Mr. Baretta," he said, "you will understand why I was going to send to you." He nodded again and began to write very hastily; then he looked up and added, "Of course you understand that the *Mail* could not print such a story if it were not true, and—and I have no doubt you will be able to deny it effectively."

"I know quite well what it is," said Baretta, pausing at the doorway with the slips in his hand. "And it's a lie—every word of it!" he cried, vehemently.

"Well, well!" Mr. Binney said, nervously, "you'd better read

it through, after all. Our reporters are very careful; the *Mail* isn't like the *Banner*, you know. And really, Mr. Baretta, it's rather extraordinary that you should deny a matter like that before you have read our story. I can't help thinking that your course only adds to the gravity of the suspicion."

"Oh, if you've made up your mind that it's true!" Baretta exclaimed, bitterly. "Why shouldn't I know what the story is? Do you think I'm a fool? I guess I'm pretty well acquainted with your reporter, Mr. Binney, though I never heard you call him that before."

"Really, Mr. Baretta, I must decline—"

"Baron Smolzow, sir—I'll stick to the title as long as it's mine, anyway!" Baretta cried. "Perhaps if you knew his motives you'd be less eager to believe him. Why, I tell you he hates me—that he has always tried to down me. You yourself made him jealous by printing my work instead of his. But it's all a damned plot—I can prove that it's a plot. Send for Yates and let me face him, and I'll show you. And I guess my word's as good as his," said Baretta, with a strange laugh in which there was little merriment.

The editor sat back in his chair and stared at him. "I must beg you to be a little more—more temperate in your remarks," he said at last, coldly. "I don't understand your allusion to Mr. Yates. He had nothing whatever to do with the article which you have in your hand—and which I should advise you to read before you say anything further."

"Oh, that's his damned malice—that's the kind of sneaking cur he is! I—I beg your pardon, Mr. Binney," he added, with an obvious effort to control himself, "but the whole thing is such a diabolical trap. Why, sir, Yates himself came to me and threatened me with exposure—I mean, with these silly lies—unless I yielded to his threats and gave up—" Here he looked at the slips, and saw on the first of them, "Is he Baron Smolzow?" set forth in large type. "I'll read what it says here, Mr. Binney," Baretta said, "but of course you see now how I knew exactly what it was. I knew Yates would come to you."

But he sat for a long time staring at these fatal bits of paper

and making no sense at all out of the printed words, which danced before his eyes and seemed to dazzle them. He was thinking of that evening when Binney had read to him the despatch from Vienna about Herr Paul Baretta-Smolzow, and how suddenly and irresistibly temptation had come upon him. And he had done it all for her, who did not care what became of him, and whom he had never had any hope of winning! It was maddening to think that the defeat of all his aspirations was complete, that there was no hope of regaining what he had lost. He was quite sure that no one would believe his bare denial, and what else had he to offer? He forced himself at last to read the story through. It was very direct—very convincing. His father had explained everything only too clearly. He had accounted for his possession of Paul Baretta's papers. The cousin of the late baron had died in New York years ago, and Emil, whom he had befriended and who was with him at the last, had stolen them from him. Emil confessed his own misdeeds with the utmost cynicism. He had always had in mind the possible advantage of having possession of such documents, although it was not until he had seen in the papers an account of his son's pretensions that he had decided to make use of them. He had taken Paul Baretta's name for various reasons, which he did not specify; one could imagine that they were not very creditable to him. It was as Paul Baretta that he had married a factory-girl, with whom he had soon quarrelled, and who very speedily drank herself to death. With the rest of his career his son was tolerably familiar. He had tried to disassociate himself from it years ago. He had run away from the guardianship of this drunken barber, and had made his own way in the world. Then ambition had led him to his ruin; the rest of the narrative was only too familiar. It was horrible to see it set down here so remorselessly, written out with such convincing minuteness.

"It's all a lie," Baretta said, throwing the slips on Mr. Binney's desk. "Don't you dare to print it!"

"We won't talk about daring, if you please," the editor said. "If you can convince me that it is false, that will be sufficient. If not—"

"You'll print it, will you, and blast my whole future?" cried the young man, angrily.

"A story that is false cannot hurt you. And as I have said, if you will deny it in any effectual way, if you will give me any reason beyond a bare assertion for suppressing it, I shall be only too glad to spare you annoyance. Whether you do so or not, I shall of course add your denial."

"It's a lie, I tell you, and if it comes out in the *Mail*—"

"Oh, you needn't take the trouble to threaten me with a libel suit," Mr. Binney interrupted. "I quite understand that you will bring one, and I am prepared to run that risk—especially in view of the attitude which you are taking," he added. He took up the slips and glanced them over in a mechanical sort of way. "There is another thing," he said, "and that is this story about your—your engagement to—to a young lady. It is not referred to here—for various reasons. Nevertheless, it is an additional reason why you should clear yourself, if you can. Mr. Lawrence is one of our foremost citizens—"

"Mr. Lawrence!" Baretta exclaimed. "What has he to do with it? Oh, I understand well enough now," he added, "who it is that has been concocting this precious yarn. You needn't think you can shield him."

"You are labouring under some extraordinary delusion. Mr. Lawrence has a good deal to do with it if you are engaged to be married to his daughter."

"Me!" cried Baretta. "Engaged to Miss Lawrence!"

"I suppose you have seen the announcement in the *Packet*? But, really," Mr. Binney went on, rather irritably, "I see no use in prolonging this interview. If you can disprove these rather serious charges you shall have every opportunity. Otherwise—well, you can't expect me to become your accomplice in deceiving the public. That isn't a pleasant thing to say, but I might as well be frank with you. It's a painful situation, Mr. Baretta. Of course if the report of your—of the engagement is false—"

"But it is true," said Baretta, eagerly. He saw that here was a possible chance to save himself, and his situation was too desperate to permit him to be over-scrupulous. "It is quite true. I am to marry Miss Lawrence. And I warn you," he added,

"of the consequences of publishing slanderous tales about me. I am able to defend myself, sir; and Mr. Lawrence—"

"We will have no threats, if you please. You have only to satisfy me that you are really Baron Smolzow, that the story told by this man who says he is your father is unworthy of credence, to stop the whole thing right here and now. But nothing else can stop it—nothing. I advise you to reflect upon the matter calmly. This article will not appear until the day after to-morrow. Good-night."

"But, Mr. Binney—"

"I am too busy to talk any further on the subject this evening. Good-night." And the editor bent over his desk and began to write very rapidly.

"I'll have my revenge—I'll pay you out for this!" Baretta shouted. "You will rue the day that you took sides with my enemies against me!" Then he rushed from the room, banging the door behind him.

He would get the better of them all yet. This was what Baretta was saying to himself as he hurried along the street. The night was cold and windy, but he buttoned his coat tightly about him and strode on. Oh yes—they need not think that he would tamely submit! Everything was at stake, and he would fight to the last. Binney would not dare to print this malicious gossip about the future son-in-law of Sibley Lawrence. It was very clear to him now that he must win Mildred if he could. Perhaps she had already seen the announcement in the *Packet* to which Binney had referred. It would annoy her, of course. But if he should ask her to make it true—what then? It was at least a possibility worth calculating upon, and he could not disregard any possibility now. When a man was fighting for his life he must use any weapon that he could find. He knew very well that Mildred did not love him; but she might consent to marry him, if she knew that her name was publicly connected with his. He had a vague notion that what he intended doing was dishonourable. Clearly, however, it was no time to indulge in mere delicacy of feeling. Everything was at stake, he told himself again. Oh yes—he would go to Miss Lawrence; it was the only chance left to him. After all, a title

was a title, and to be Baroness Smolzow was a prospect that might well appeal to her ambition. She had been kind to him of late, certainly; and it might be that she really was beginning to care for him. Why should she not?—she who had once actually been engaged to that fellow Yates. There was no reason why a woman should not care for him. Maud worshipped the very ground he walked on. Poor Maud! whom he was going to give up in spite of his protestations. He could not fail to experience a pang of self-reproach at the thought, perhaps also of regret; he was very fond of Maud, who loved him as no one else did. But, surely, if she understood all, she would herself be ready to make the sacrifice. Had she not pleaded with him to give her up, when he had defied his father, and had sworn that he would marry her, no matter what befell? Oh, he had been a fool! He had been his own worst enemy all along! Why had he not foreseen how unbearable the defeat of all his aspirations would be—how tragic the ruin of all his hopes?

And there was Yates—he would have his revenge upon Yates. It was he who had planned all this, who had taken the story to Binney. Why should he believe Binney's denial? The case was only too plain. He hurried towards Livingstone Place, with a wild hope that somehow he might achieve his purpose then and there. He saw a light in Yates's windows from the corner of the street, and stood staring at it, muttering unintelligible imprecations and shaking his fist. If only he could strike him dead, so quietly and quickly that no one should know, that no wild cry should betray him! The thought seemed to burn like fire into his brain. For a long time he watched the lighted windows. He was chilled through and through; he shivered, and his teeth chattered, but he was hardly aware of it. To strike Yates dead, and let no one know, and thus be rid of this malignant enemy forever! He laughed aloud—a horrible mocking laugh—as he turned away and hurried home.

CHAPTER XXXIII

BARETTA'S HUMILIATION

ALL night he was haunted by feverish dreams—dreams so wild and desperate that more than once he awoke with a sudden cry and lay trembling in the darkness with a hideous foreboding of evil. He was constantly pursuing a shadowy figure that ever escaped him; when he reached out to grasp it he stumbled and felt himself falling into a dizzying abyss. Sometimes there was a gleam as of a shining blade luring him on; and then the air seemed to be filled with fire and red like blood. He rose at last in the cold and dismal dawn, and dressed himself, and sat for a long time like one stupefied, his head buried in his arms, which he crossed upon the desk before him. It grew lighter, and the sounds in the street became more frequent; but still he sat unheeding.

“Good Gawd, y’r ’ighness! what’s the matter?” It was the voice of the janitor, who, after rattling vainly at the door, had opened it with his key and entered. “Is y’r ’ighness ill?” he added, as Baretta lifted his head and gazed at him vacuously.

“I—I couldn’t sleep,” said Baretta at last, rousing himself. “How cold it is! You’d better build a fire, Thompson. Ill? no, I ain’t ill.” As he spoke he caught a glimpse of his drawn and haggard face in the glass and started back. “I—I do look pretty badly, but I ain’t ill.”

“Y’r ’ighness had better take precious good care of yourself, or you will be.” Thompson said “tyke” and “kyer,” being a thorough-bred cockney. For the same reason he always remembered that his lodger had a title, though only a foreign one. Thompson had once been a stable-boy on the estate of a “dook”

in his native land, and he didn't think much of foreign titles. But he felt that as long as "y' grace" or "y' ludship" didn't sound just right "y'r 'ighness" would be a happy substitute.

"I couldn't sleep," Baretta repeated. "Send me up some strong coffee, Thompson, and a couple of eggs. I feel faint, but I haven't any appetite. But for Heaven's sake don't tell me I'm ill!" he added, irritably. "I'd be all right if I could sleep."

He went into the chamber while the janitor was labouring over the fire, and presently reappeared with one of his razors in his hand. "Look here, Thompson," he said, "do you think it would hurt a man very much to cut his throat—that is, after the first moment of pain? Could he be sure of killing himself instantly—of losing consciousness at once? Or would a revolver be better? That scamp Emil has left his revolver behind him. What would you advise, Thompson?"

"For Gawd's sake!" cried the frightened janitor, jumping to his feet and wrenching the razor from Baretta's hand. "Are you hout of your 'ead? A suercide, y'r 'ighness, and in this 'ouse!"

"Don't you worry, Thompson," said Baretta, with a wild and discordant laugh. "Oh, I'm not going to hurt myself. Give me back that razor, you fool; I want to shave, that's all. Don't I look as if I needed it? Give it to me, I say!"

"If y'r 'ighness is sure—"

"Sure? Of course I'm sure. I was only trying to scare you. It won't be in your house—don't you worry about that."

Thompson yielded this possible weapon very reluctantly, nevertheless, and was inexpressibly relieved, when he came back with the toast and eggs, to find the Baron seated calmly before the fire reading the morning paper. "I 'ope y'r 'ighness won't give me such a start again," he said.

"What start? Oh, about the razor! Don't be a fool."

The man deposited the tray upon the table, and hovered about as if uncertain whether to stay or go. "I 'ope there's nothing troubling y'r 'ighness," he said at last.

"No, no—of course not! You mind your own business, Thompson."

"It was only a friendly hinterest," Thompson said, reproach-

fully. He went to the door, then came back again. "The hagent was 'ere yesterday about the rent," he said, with an apologetic cough.

"Well, well, I will attend to that. And if you will kindly leave me to myself until I have eaten my breakfast—"

"Cert'nly, y'r 'ighness." And Thompson went away, not without an uneasy backward glance at his lodger.

Baretta pulled himself together, and ate his eggs and drank the coffee with an effort. He was in truth a little alarmed about himself. His mind was clear enough now, but he recalled those wild dreams of the night with a shudder. What did it all mean—that he was losing his wits under the heavy pressure of misfortune? How could that be possible, when there was still hope that he might get the better of all his enemies? If he had an ally like Sibley Lawrence on his side, Binney or anybody else would be mighty careful about attacking him. And this was what he must do to save himself. He smiled as he thought what a triumph it would be to have defied his father and yet to marry Miss Lawrence and remain the Baron Smolzow after all. He would not then fear anything that any one, even his father himself, might do. Let him spread his idle tale abroad; no one would believe it of Sibley Lawrence's son-in-law. And he had the papers safely locked up in his desk. It would be hard work to 'prove that they were not genuine; let Yates and the rest try it if they dared. Yes, he was very sure the papers were genuine, however his father might have come by them. They were safe enough—along with the money which he had received for some lectures over at Cambridge at two dollars a ticket. What had Thompson bothered him for in that way about the rent? Confound the fellow! but he would give him the money. He went to the desk and unlocked it, and pulled out the drawer where he kept his bank-notes, his papers, and other valuables. It was empty.

The discovery completely unnerved him. He fell back in his chair with a strange choking sob. This was the worst blow of all; it destroyed his hopes completely. Everything was gone—his money, and the papers that he had relied upon to enable him to prove his claim in spite of all the accusations which might be

brought against him. And now they were gone! Stolen by the vile thief who had been mean enough to take his watch and his slender stock of plate and a few costly pieces of china and the little mementos that had been given him by his admirers. Gone—gone! What a fool he had been not to suspect at once when he discovered the other thefts. But his desk had been locked—as if that would make any difference to a clever rascal like his father! The papers that he had risked so much to gain, on which he now depended as a forlorn last hope, were no longer in his possession. To lose them was worse than to lose the money, badly as he needed that. And his father had taken them away. It was the consummation of an infamous plot against him. For a long time he sat before the open drawer, dazed and with a stupefying consciousness of impotence. There was nothing now that he could do but yield to fate and go away forever. Then a fresh realization of how much this would mean came upon him, and he started up muttering that he would balk them all yet. He strode up and down the room with clinched fists; and there was a bitter scowl upon his face. There was at least one enemy within reach who should feel the fury of his revenge.

He was still very pale, and there was the same unnatural light in his eyes, when, on the afternoon of this same day, he rang the bell at the house in Mount Vernon Street. His hand was trembling violently when he gave his card to the man who came to the door, and who stared at him disapprovingly as he asked him into the drawing-room. He suspected the Baron of having been drinking more than was good for him—a suspicion which would have been strengthened had he waited to see the visitor walking nervously about the room, his hat and gloves still in his hand, and at intervals shaking his head and muttering to himself.

“Miss Lawrence—Mildred!” Baretta cried, turning suddenly as she entered. He had been waiting a long while, as it seemed to him; and he had begun to wonder if by any chance his enemies had been before him, if she would refuse to see him at all. “Oh, forgive me!” he added, “but I was afraid I might never see you again. You will forgive me, won’t you, when

you understand how much I have suffered? Good God! Mildred—what is it? why don't you speak to me?"

"Mr. Baretta!" said Mildred, shrinking from him. "You are forgetting yourself. I—I don't know what right you have to address me in that manner. Will you be seated?" she asked, indicating a chair near by. "I—I thought I would see you, Mr. Baretta," she went on in an embarrassed way, "because I would not condemn you unheard."

"Oh, they have come to you already, have they?" exclaimed the young man, rising hastily and sending his chair half across the room with the vehemence of the movement. "They have tried to poison your mind against me with vile stories—that are false, I tell you! every word of them is false!"

"Unless you can control yourself better than this, Mr. Baretta, I cannot listen to you at all." Mildred had risen, too, and her face was pale as if with fear; but nevertheless her voice was firm and her manner coldly determined. "I do not want to believe ill of you; I hope it is all a mistake."

"It's a lie—that's what it is! That fellow is a scoundrel—a villain! I sent him away, and this is his revenge. Why, he's a thief—he stole my watch, my money, when he went. He even took the papers which prove that I am Baron Smolzow. But no one can prove that I am not."

"I—I wish I knew what to think."

"It's a lie, I tell you! Isn't my word as good as his? Oh, I know very well who has been slandering me to you. He came and threatened me, and I defied him to do his worst. But you know his motive—you will not let him come between us. Miss Lawrence," Baretta went on, "you must listen to me. You must have seen that I love you—I adore you. I will do anything if I may have the hope of making you my wife."

"Mr. Baretta, I beg you to say no more. It is very distressing to me; it must be distressing to you. I will try to forget it—to believe that you do not realize your position."

"My position!" he cried. "I suppose you mean that it is presumption on my part." He gave a scornful laugh. "Presumption! Well, if I am Baron Smolzow, I don't see why. And I tell you I am! What have you heard to the contrary

except a lot of idle gossip? It was a low trick—and do you think I don't understand the motive? If you really cared for me you would not heed it for a moment."

"I do not care for you—in the way you wish," Mildred said.

"That is no answer at all. Why won't you say that you don't believe his lies? A fellow who has always hated me, who is jealous of my success! Oh yes—you have listened to Yates, but you will not listen to me!"

"We will end this conversation, if you please," said Mildred, haughtily. "I have tried to be patient, but there is a limit to everything. Will you excuse me?"

She moved towards the door, but Baretta placed himself before it and intercepted her. "You must listen to me!" he cried; "I tell you that you must!"

"Will you have the goodness to let me pass?"

"No—not till you have heard what I have to say. Oh, forgive me, Mildred, but I am desperate—my love for you is driving me wild. I tell you that you must listen! Why do you treat me with scorn, as if I were the dirt under your feet?" he asked, bitterly. "Is it because you are still in love with him—with that fellow Yates, who isn't worth your love? I guess I'm as good as he! It's all a lie, I tell you—the story that I have no right to the title and estates. I can give you an honourable name—I can make you rich. Why should you look down on me? I might have been nobody when you knew me first, but that's all over now. Mildred, my whole future is in your hands. If you throw me over—well, you'll see what I will do. I won't be cast aside for him—just you remember that! Yes," he cried, menacingly, "if it comes to murder the blood will be on your head!"

"Will you let me pass?"

"Not till you've heard me out. Don't think I'd hurt you, Mildred—why, I love every hair of your head. I'd lay down my life for you. Look at this!" he cried, drawing Herr Emil's revolver from his pocket. "There's a bullet here for some one, and it's as likely to be me as anybody."

Mildred turned very pale at the sight of the weapon, but she would not show she was afraid. "I used to try to think you a

gentleman," she said, angrily, "but I know now that you are not. Will you let me pass, or shall I ring for the servants?"

"The servants! Oh, you will have me put out of the house, will you?" Baretta's eyes dilated with sudden fury as he spoke. "The servants! Let one of them touch me, that's all! So it's war you want, is it?" he went on. "You despise me—you refuse me; you think that the slanders which Yates has been pouring into your ears are true. I suppose you haven't thought how some stories would sound about yourself, have you? Oh, that hits home—I guess you read the *Packet*! Well, if I'm disgraced, you'll be disgraced, too. You can marry me or not, but people will think you wanted to."

"You coward!" was Mildred's contemptuous response to his wild harangue.

"Coward!" Baretta shrieked. "Say that again—just you say that again!" He flourished his revolver, but Mildred only looked at him with eyes full of contempt and loathing. "Oh, I'll have my revenge for this; I won't be ruined all alone."

But here an unexpected interruption occurred. "What does this mean?" Mildred's father asked, suddenly flinging open the door.

"Oh, papa!" and the girl who had faced her peril bravely enough, but who was quite unnerved by her deliverance from it, threw herself into Mr. Lawrence's arms and burst into tears.

"I have just one thing to say to you," Mr. Lawrence said, with a sternness all the more impressive because it came from so mild a man, turning to Baretta: "Leave this house instantly."

Baretta looked at him blankly a moment; then he picked up his hat. "I'll pay you all for this yet!" he cried, furiously, as he rushed out.

There was nothing left but that—nothing but revenge. This was the one idea that possessed him as he wandered desperately about the streets, neither knowing nor caring where he went. His brain was in a whirl, but this single point was clear enough. Revenge upon them all—it would be sweet indeed. His last desperate hope was gone, but he would not suffer alone. First of all there was Yates; it was Yates who had done this. What could be plainer? He had come to him with threats, and then .

he had gone to Miss Lawrence and told her all. Baretta could not see how futile this assumption was. He could not understand that others should be more scrupulous than himself. Oh, it was all so very obvious! And now Yates should be the first to suffer. He could strike at Miss Lawrence through Yates, whom she still loved; he had accused her of loving him, and she had not denied it. If it hadn't been for that she would have believed him when he told her that the story was all a lie. Now there was no one to believe him; even the wretched papers for which he had risked everything had been stolen from him. No one would believe him—no one but Maud! whom he had been willing to abandon in order to save himself. Perhaps this was not the least humiliation which he had to undergo. It was a hideous thing to sell one's honour and then be cheated out of the reward. But he loved Maud, and he would be faithful to her now whatever happened. He did not ask himself how much such fidelity was worth.

Night was coming on, and he began to realize that a feeling of irrepressible weariness was overtaking him. He could no longer think even of revenge; only a succession of confused and uncertain images were projected upon the retina of his brain. He found himself at last sitting in a doorway near Manchester Square, pressing both hands to his throbbing temples. Why had he wandered here? Was it because fancy had carried him back to the old days, before these cursed ambitions had taken possession of him? And Maud was his friend now as then. Oh yes—he would go to Maud; she, at least, would be kind to him. He walked on to Roxbury, and found the dingy tenement, and climbed with feverish haste the steep and narrow stairs. Ill?—why should he be ill? He heard himself asking Maud this question, and he knew then that she was trying to soothe him, to persuade him to lie down and rest. Ill! but he felt well enough. Then presently he awoke, all alone in the dim room, and hurried down-stairs. There was a woman screaming somewhere, and pounding on a door. What did it all mean? But how foolish it was in Maud to talk of sending for a doctor; he was as well as any one. It was because Maud was so fond of him. This was the one consolation that he had.

And it was she whom he had loved at the last. He seemed to hear himself telling her that as he hurried away through the darkness once more. He knew now what it was that he must do. He placed his hand instinctively upon the revolver in his pocket as he walked along.

CHAPTER XXXIV

BARETTA'S REVENGE

"It is no more than I expected," Daisy had said, when Philip went to her with this strange story about the Baron Smolzow. "Oh, it isn't because I want to say, 'I told you so.' But I knew that he wasn't a gentleman, and his absurd pretences about his title showed very plainly that he was an adventurer."

"I'm afraid there's no doubt of that now," said Philip, gravely.

"How stupid in everybody to be taken in! Oh yes, nearly everybody was taken in, although now they'll find out that they suspected him from the first. It's always the way. I dare say, Philip, you think I was taken in, too, in spite of what I say."

"I wouldn't dispute your word in any case, Daisy. But I haven't forgotten how frank you have been in your dislike of him. I had hoped it was all prejudice on our part."

"Well, I'm glad he's been found out. Is that very horrid of me? Perhaps it is, but I can't help hating him. And oh, Philip, to think what people will say about her after that silly gossip in the *Packet*! Have you seen it?"

"Yes," Philip said. "That is why I came to you—because some one must let her know. This story that is coming out in the *Mail*—well, they will keep her name out of that. But she must be told beforehand. I hated to come to you, Daisy; it seemed somehow mean and underhanded. And—and of course you will let no one know that I interfered in any way. It might be rather distressing—under all the circumstances."

"Oh, I have no patience with her!" Daisy cried. "And you," she said, as he rose to go and she gave him her hand,

"you have too much patience. I—I wish— Well, good-bye, Philip. I can't promise never to betray you."

But she did promise, after all, because Philip made such a point of it. After he had gone she sat in the drawing-room until one of the servants came in with lights, and started back with an apology at finding her alone before the fire. "Oh yes, Mary," Daisy said, "I was thinking of ringing. I am not at home for the rest of the afternoon." How very short the days were, she thought; only half-past four and it was quite dark. She went up-stairs to put on her hat and jacket, and she stood rather longer than usual before the mirror, gazing at herself very critically. "I wish I was really pretty. Some people might think me passably good-looking, but I'm not my style of girl at all. Isn't it horrid to have red hair? If mine were only as dark as hers! Oh, I have no patience with her!"

Meanwhile Yates had gone away wondering if he had done right after all, and what would be the result of his interference. He was very anxious that Mildred should not know that he had any hand in warning her. She would suspect him of motives which he did not have, and either exaggerate his services or else be unjust to him. He smiled rather bitterly as he reflected that the latter alternative was the more probable. But what did it matter to him? He had quite done with all that nonsense. A woman needn't expect to have a man's heart forever at her feet to trample on. His hurt had been a grievous one, but he had endured it as manfully as he could; and now if the pain grew less, if the old wound ceased to burn and throb, let him be grateful for that. It was surprising how much comfort he found in the thought that Daisy understood him and sympathized with him. Perhaps it was even absurd, because Daisy was not, after all, an extraordinary girl in any way. She was nice enough, but he could not imagine why any one should fall in love with her more than with a dozen other girls. Then he impatiently told himself that this was a foolish train of thought; and he went to the club for the diversion of a few games of pool before dinner.

It was the next evening when Parker came to his rooms in Livingstone Place to tell him that the story about Baretta would

appear in the *Mail* on the following morning. "The Baron has been in to see the old man," Parker said, "and I guess he threatened him with a libel suit, because he told me to be sure and verify every single statement; and he treated my stuff with a dose of blue pencil, confound him! But it's going to come out to-morrow."

"Oh, well, I dare say you have the facts all right. I am much obliged to you for letting me know, but there's nothing I can do now."

"I've done as I promised, at any rate. And you'll find that I've kept out the names of the Lawrences and all those people."

"I suppose you owe me a grudge for that, but I had a very good reason for asking you," Philip said. "I am sure Mr. Binney would say I was right. Oh, don't hurry away. Won't you have a cigar?"

"Thanks—I'll smoke it by-and-by, but I really must go now. Good-night, Mr. Yates. There'll be a big demand for the *Mail* in the morning, I guess."

Philip gave a sigh of relief after Parker had gone, not because that young man's society bored him, but because he was thankful to have Baretta and his concerns off his mind. He pitied the poor devil, to be sure; but at last he had rid himself of the responsibility which so many people had insisted in thrusting upon him, and he knew that Mildred had by this time been made acquainted with the truth. His sympathy with the young man might have been more active had not the recollection of his last interview with him been so fresh in his mind. That had shown him in his true colours—a fellow who was unprincipled and reckless. There had been murder in his eye when he threw that knife. "Pah!" said Philip to himself. "Why can't I dismiss him from my mind?" Yes, it was very clear that he needed some distraction—something to take him out of his past and give life a fresh aspect to him. Even if he had succeeded in teaching himself to forget Mildred, he would not have been happy. He felt the need of new interests, of other hopes. Simply to be content with an acknowledgment of failure was moral and mental death. And it ought to mean so

much just to live when one is still young, with good health and with money enough to keep one from want.

How long he sat before the fire reflecting thus he did not know, but the sound of a knock at the door reminded him that it was very late, and he arose to answer it, vaguely wondering who his visitor could be. He started back in amazement when he saw that it was Baretta. "You!" he cried.

"Yes, me—why shouldn't it be me?" Baretta said, coming in. "I guess you'll listen to me this time." He brushed by Yates and flung himself into a chair. "Don't you try to put me out!" he cried.

Philip stared at him. Baretta's face was pale and his lips twitched nervously, but his eyes were unusually bright. He laughed in a mocking fashion when he saw how he had astonished his enemy. "Oh, I'm all right," he said. "Don't you be afraid. It's a matter of business I've got to settle with you, and there's no time like the present, is there?"

"I think you had better come some other time for that," Philip said, still holding the door open.

"Oh, do you think you can turn me out? Well, you can't. But see here," Baretta went on, with a sudden change from defiance to entreaty, "why should you want to be rough on me, Yates? When a poor devil is down it's hardly fair to give him a kick. It ain't what I expected of you. I—I beg your pardon for coming in as I did," he said, rising and laying his hat upon the table, "but I've had so much to endure—so many enemies to fight—that I felt almost desperate. If you knew how my head aches—here! And yet she refused to listen to me. No one will listen to me but you—and you must do that. Do you think I'll go down without a struggle, and let you all jeer at me? No, by Heaven! I won't do that! But I say, Yates, you must forgive me if I talk a little wild. I've had so much to endure. Why, there are a dozen men outside there shaking their heads and laughing at me. I heard them saying 'He's not Baron Smolzew' as I came up the stairs."

"Oh, well, I wouldn't think of that," said Philip, soothingly. He closed the door, and came back to the fireplace, on one side of which his unexpected visitor was now sitting.

"You just stay here a little while, and perhaps they will go away."

"Go away? They'll never go away."

"I will look out for that. You are tired, and you need a little rest."

Baretta leaned back in the chair with a sigh and closed his eyes. Philip remarked once more how intense his pallor was, how his whole bearing was that of a man who had collapsed under an intense strain. Of course he could not send him away while he was out of his head; there was no telling what harm he might do to himself. Philip had been little inclined, as we have seen, to sympathize with Baretta in his humiliation and ruin, but it was impossible to cherish unkindly feelings against one with whom Fate had dealt so hardly as this. Surely the blow had been a heavy one—far heavier than he had supposed it could be in the case of one guarded by the armour of an intense egoism, which usually offers more consolations than all the religion in the world.

"I—I guess I am tired," Baretta said, presently. "I've had a great deal on my mind. A man doesn't lose a title and estates every day. No doubt you're glad of it—"

"I'm not glad of it!" Philip cried. "I wish you'd get rid of that foolish idea, Baretta," he went on, forgetting that if his visitor were indeed out of his head it would be idle to argue with him. "You've thrown it in my face a hundred times; but it isn't true—it never was true."

"I know a good deal more than you think," said Baretta, with a cunning smile. "Why, look here, she turned me out of her house to-day—actually turned me out of her house. Whose doing was that? Do you suppose I am a child to be deceived by your pretences? That's what I wanted to talk to you about—if those damned fellows down-stairs would only go away and leave me in peace."

"Oh, I think they're going. But we can discuss that some other time—when you are not so tired. What you must do is to forget all about that Baron story and begin again. It will seem hard at first, but things will come around all right in time. And I dare say you will be happier working on in the old way."

When you feel quite rested I'll walk along with you. A good night's sleep is what you want more than anything else."

"There'll be time enough for sleep." He sighed again, and his head fell forward languidly upon his breast.

Philip stood looking at him in silence, quite undecided how to act in this unexpected emergency. It was strange that Baretta's affairs should be thus thrust upon him, despite his anxiety to have no more to do with them. There must have been a touch of insanity in Baretta all along; so that perhaps he was less to blame than circumstances had indicated. It was the most charitable explanation of his conduct, at any rate.

Half an hour passed and Baretta still sat with closed eyes, while Philip wandered nervously about the room. He was tempted once or twice to call upon the man across the entry for help; but when he went to the window he saw that several cabs stood on the corner, and so he decided that the best thing to do was to get Baretta down-stairs presently, and depend upon the assistance of a cabman to take him home. He hated to disturb him, for he hoped that he would awaken of his own accord, and perhaps with his faculties fully restored. But was he asleep? His eyes were closed, but Philip was not sure. At the end of half an hour he went over and touched him lightly on the shoulder.

"Yes, yes!" said Baretta, starting up. "Oh, is it you, Yates? Well, see here," he went on, in an aggrieved tone, "you've played a mean trick on me, and that's the matter I want to settle with you."

"I think you'd better go home. There's a cab below. I'll go along with you. I'm afraid you're not feeling very well."

"I'm as well as I ever was. Why do you all harp on my being ill? There was Maud—she said the same thing. You don't know Maud, do you? Well, she'll stand by me; you haven't had the chance to go to her with your damnable lies. You went to Mildred, and she turned me out of the house. But you needn't think you'll escape. That's the matter I've come to settle with you." He arose as he spoke, and confronted Yates with a malignant scowl. "Yes, and I'll settle it for good and all," he cried.

"Not to-night, Baretta; it will do just as well to-morrow. But

you're mistaken. It isn't my fault that the story has come out. And if you'll take my advice, and bear your trouble like a man, I'll help you."

"Help! I don't want your help—I despise you and your help. What you must do is to come out and fight me—do you understand?—fight me. We can go off somewhere to a quiet place, and you can try to finish your work by killing me—unless I kill you. Do you understand me now?"

Clearly the young man was quite crazy, and there was nothing to do but to humour him. "Oh yes, I understand you," said Philip. "But who ever heard of a duel without seconds? You go home, and in the morning send some friend of yours to me, and then the whole thing can be arranged."

"Ah, I see your trick! You think you can be off in the morning, and that I can't find you then. No, it's now or never. Come, come—no more nonsense about it!"

"Well, we can talk that over on your way home. I'll go with you. We can't fight here, at any rate."

"Don't imagine you'll escape me, though." Baretta took up his hat, and started towards the door; but suddenly he staggered slightly and pressed his hand to his forehead with a cry of pain. "It aches! it aches!" he muttered. Then he turned to Yates again. "What was it I was saying?" he asked. "My head feels a little queer."

"Oh, it was nothing of any consequence. You'll feel better when you get home."

"Who said I was ill?" demanded Baretta, in an angry tone, but with the air of one who has all his wits about him. "I'm not in the least ill—I don't see why you should all insist that I am. However, that's not the question. You've treated me abominably, Yates, and I've come here to tell you that I know it, and to warn you that I intend to strike back. Why wouldn't you listen to me the other day? You gave me no chance to explain. You swallowed all that fellow's lies about me, and then rushed off to Miss Lawrence and poisoned her mind against me. By Heaven! I'll have my revenge for that."

"I—I don't quite know what to make of you," Philip said. "Are you in your right mind or not?"

"In my right mind? Of course I'm in my right mind. What the devil are you driving at?"

"Then why do you come here in this fashion with your incoherent rubbish about revenge? It looks as if you'd been playing off crazy on me."

"You seem to be a little touched yourself!" said Baretta, contemptuously. "I can't understand your talk on any other supposition. But we've had enough of this sort of thing. I say again that you have slandered and maligned me, and I intend to make you answer for it."

"It is not I who have slandered and maligned you—if you call telling the truth about you slandering and maligning. I came to you the other day because I wanted to save you—as well as others. You treated me in such a manner that I had no other course left than the one I took."

"Which was to go to Miss Lawrence—"

"We will leave her name out of the discussion, if you please," interrupted Philip. "You have said quite enough about her. If I hadn't supposed you were out of your head— But I didn't realize that you were such a fine actor. Really," Philip said with a sneer, "now that the Baron business is played out you ought to go on the stage."

"Damn you!" cried Baretta, furiously. "I suppose you think that because I am down you can kick me safely. But you'll find out your mistake—just remember that. Do you suppose I believe you when you tell me you had no hand in this vile conspiracy against me? Pah! you lie—you're a damned liar, that's what you are!"

"Leave this room!" Philip said, sharply, exasperated beyond endurance by this outbreak of insult and intemperate anger. "Leave this room! If you come here again you'll get a broken head. That's all I have to say to a fellow of your stamp. Do you hear what I say? Why don't you go?"

"Oh, I'm going," said Baretta, with a mocking laugh. "I'm going. I know now perfectly well who my enemy is. You've shown yourself in your true colours. Don't blame me if anything happens." He laughed again, bowed very low with exaggerated courtesy, and went away closing the door loudly

behind him. Philip heard him laugh a third time on the stairs.

"After all," Philip said, when the first feeling of anger had begun to die away, "it was a little below the belt to talk about the Baron business and the stage." He was rid of him at last, however; those vapourings about revenge were too ridiculous to be considered seriously. But what an absurd piece of business it was for a man to pretend that he was out of his head! Was it pretence? It must be that, since Baretta was certainly sane enough when he went away. And yet Philip was not sure. It had been marvellously real. "I hope he will get home all right," Philip thought. After all, what concern was it of his? Since Baretta had apparently come to his senses, at any rate, he had no right to interfere. It was a responsibility of which he was glad to be relieved. Nevertheless, he strolled to the window presently with a vague idea that Baretta might still be lingering about. There was no one in the place below; even the cabs on the corner had disappeared. "Probably he rode home," was Philip's conclusion. It struck him that the air was close in the room, and he threw up the sash and leaned out for a moment.

Baretta laughed as he went down the stairs, and when he reached the pavement he looked back and shook his fist menacingly. "If I had only done it then!" he muttered. "I'm a coward—a coward! I talk and talk, but when the time comes to act—pah! what a coward I am!" He walked to the corner, keeping in the shadow; then he stopped short, and looked back once more. "What did he mean by my playing off crazy? Is there anything wrong with me? What should there be wrong? My head aches, but any number of people have trouble of that sort. What a coward I was not to do it then! Still, there would have been a risk." He glanced cautiously about him. "From that doorway across the street, now—it's dark in there and no one would see. There's that cabman shaking his head at me and saying I'm not Baron Smolzow. I must get out of his sight, anyway. Damn you, I'll fire at you if you don't stop shaking your head." He went on thus with incoherent mutterings for several minutes, and more than one passer-by

stopped to stare at him. Then he crept back under the shadow of the building, and after a moment of hesitation, crossed over and hid himself in the shadow of the doorway opposite. He could see the windows of Yates's rooms plainly from where he stood. Curse the fellow! who had hated him from the first, and had worked against and finally ruined him; and who would live in luxury among the swells, while he married Maud and went back to shabby lodgings. There was no justice in it. But this was an unjust world, in which the weakest went to the wall.

His father's revolver was still in his pocket, and he took it out and gazed at it affectionately. "He left me this anyway, if he did take my papers and my money. I guess it may be just as much use." He chuckled to himself at the thought. It was a fine thing to be able, simply by moving a finger, to put an enemy out of the way. It gave one such a sense of power. Only a coward would worry about the consequences. That cabman out there would be shaking his infernal head again and calling him a coward. He peered cautiously from the doorway, but there was no one in sight. The cabman must be around the corner. At that moment he heard the noise of an opening window and looked up quickly. By Heaven! it was Yates; his figure was sharply outlined in the yellow glow from within. Baretta took up his revolver once more and pointed it at his unconscious victim. How easy it would be! He had only to move a finger, and then all that he had suffered would be amply avenged. He heard some one whispering in his ear that he was a coward. A coward? He would show them whether he was a coward or not.

Then a shot rang sharply out in the still night air.

CHAPTER XXXV

"THERE ARE BLIND WAYS PROVIDED"

It seemed to him as if he had been wandering for whole days and nights, neither eating nor sleeping—only hurrying through some vague, misty, unknown country where all the shapes he met were grizzly spectres. He had raised his revolver and fired, and then he had slunk away in the shadow. He remembered hearing voices, and seeing two or three hurrying figures. But no one had noticed him, no one interfered with him as he came out into the light and walked rapidly away. He could not quite realize what he had done. He had seen Yates stagger and fall backward; afterwards everything became dim before his eyes. The two squares of light that he had been watching flamed out red. He shivered and buttoned his coat tightly about him; the wind seemed to pierce him through and through as he hurried on. One thought only was in his mind—to go where his enemies could not reach him. He had nothing to stay for now that he had punished the worst enemy of all. He could not revenge himself upon Mildred, who had called him a coward. And yet if she loved Yates still, this would be striking her through him. Perhaps that was the completest vengeance of all. They could ruin him if they would, but he had made others suffer; whatever happened it would be sweet to know that. But now he must go away before they found him—before the hideous story was ringing in everybody's ears as it rang in his own.

What was the thing he had heard that Pinkerton fellow read one day—the man whom he hated, and who hated him? Curse him! why was there no way of shooting him down, too? And

Mildred herself—the revolver had been in his hand when she called him a coward, and still he had not used it. That would have been the fitting ending of all, to take her life, and then his own! It was too late now; but why had he not done it? Surely life was drawing to a close for him. He had shot down Yates, but his own time was coming; this throbbing in his temples, the red light that dazzled his eyes—were they not fatal premonitions? Oh yes, he would find some refuge from his troubles at the last. Strange that he could not recall the lines that Pinkerton had read! he whose memory was so good. It must be the pain he was suffering that bewildered him. There were blind ways provided—oh, he knew the lines now! Where was he? Here were the naked branches of the trees wailing above his head; it was like some great scene in a theatre.

“There are blind ways provided, the foredone,
Heart-weary player in this pageant world
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
By the conspicuous portal.”

What did it all mean? The words were meaningless enough to him. Poetry was poor stuff; there was no consolation in talking about players and masques when one had played his own part merely to be hissed off the stage. What did the poets know about it? It was a poet who had aroused him to pity the complaining millions of men, who darken in labour and pain; and how much good had he been to them or to himself? He had wasted a great career, and he had not even gratitude to show for it. The complaining millions had turned against him. Ditton and Luck and all the rest were his enemies, too. Perhaps he might have a chance to revenge himself upon them, he thought, as he thrust his hand into his pocket and grasped the revolver once more. That would be better than dropping out by the blind ways provided for the heart-weary player. Pah! couldn't he get that nonsensical stuff out of his head! Curse all poets and poetry! he had other things to think of. Oh, there were opportunities yet—for many things. If only that throbbing in his head would stop for a moment, that he might think clearly.

Was not this the dawn coming up grimly out of the east? Surely there was a cold gleam of light upon the deserted pavements, and the orange lamps were turning a sickly yellow. But how cold it was, and how the wind cut him to the very heart! He was a fool to be wandering about the streets of the city in this fashion. Why didn't he go home and go to bed? It was sleep that he needed—sleep to still the pain and the misery. What had he done that he should wander about like a vagabond? He had no reason to be afraid. No one would suspect him. Dead men tell no tales. Dead! who knew that Yates was dead? He had seen him stagger and fall, but no one could say that he was dead. Nothing but failure—even his revenge might be that; and then he would have to drop out by one of the blind ways. It was maddening to think that all his life had gone completely astray—that even in its last moments it was miserably futile. For was not this the end of all? It would be better to die than to live an object of scorn to one's self and to all the world. The whole bitter struggle would be over if he put the weapon he was fondling to his head; and then it would not matter what was said of him. Perhaps it was the only revenge he could take. Some of those who persecuted him—who were determined to drag him down—might have the remorseful conviction that they had driven him to it. This anticipation was an emotional luxury that helped to console him for what he had suffered.

But, no—why should he acknowledge defeat before it was inevitable? He had revenged himself upon Yates, and upon the woman who had spurned him, but who loved Yates. That was something worth thinking of; even if they traced the deed to his hand he could still exult. Pah! what folly it was to fancy that the truth must come to light. No one had seen him; he was sure of that, or he would have been followed and taken. And although he had threatened Yates, and had left Livingston Place in anger, so that they might suspect, he need not be afraid of mere suspicion. Besides, if his aim had been true, if his enemy were really dead, no one would know of his visit at all. "A Mysterious Murder!"—the words seemed to dance before his eyes in big black letters, just as they would appear to the

startled gaze of all the city in the morning. Why, it was morning now, and the story had already gone forth from the great hurrying presses! And what would be said if he should be found here, wandering about with the very weapon in his pocket? What a fool he was! Could it be true that he was losing his wits? He must get home at once. The gray light glimmered along the dull rows of blank and tenantless windows as he hurried along. As he turned into Huntington Avenue from the tangle of South End streets in which he had lost himself, he came face to face with a solitary policeman. Curse the fellow! why should he stare at him in that fashion? Was there anything strange in a gentleman going home rather later than usual—after a little game of cards somewhat unduly prolonged? The excuse rose to his lips almost without premeditation, as he reflected that he might have to account for himself because of the testimony of that one witness. But whose business was it where he had been? Suspicion and proof often lie a long way apart; and proof would surely be impossible, and he did not care if they suspected him. He had lost so much that losing a little more did not count. Everything was gone, and his only friend in the world was Maud, whom he had been willing to throw over in order to save himself. Poor Maud! but he would make it up to her. She would be waiting for him, and she would go to the end of the world with him.

He let himself into the house very softly, and crept up-stairs to his own rooms. When he was well inside he fell helplessly into a chair, realizing for the first time how utterly exhausted he was. Curse that clock! why did it tick so loudly, beating into his brain like the strokes of a hammer? His conscience did not accuse him; it was mere justice that he had wrought upon the enemy who had betrayed him; and yet the clock was like an accusing conscience. He would stop it—by-and-by, when his head ceased to swim and his heart to beat so violently. If he could only find oblivion as easily as he could do that! Oh yes! there were blind ways provided—but his part was not yet played. When the shock of all that had happened was over, and he could think more clearly, he would know what to do.

But they must not find him here—these enemies of his, who would try even yet to track him down. He rose presently and wandered about the room, putting together a few things that he must take with him. Curse the clock! He seized it in a sudden fury and hurled it to the floor. There was a confused rattle, and the sharp sound of a bell; then it was silent. He gave a sigh of relief to find himself free from its unspoken monitions; a conscience like that would be maddening. Oh, it was clear that he must get away from everything which reminded him of what he had done. He went into his chamber, and brought out a large travelling-bag, and began to pack his clothing in it. He had paid more attention to clothes of late than had been his wont in the old days. He had a handsome suit of evening clothes, and he knew their use now. He also had a black frock-coat faced with silk and elegantly made—not the ill-fitting garment he had worn on the occasion of his first appearance at Mrs. Chilton's. These he tumbled rather recklessly into the bag, throwing scarfs, collars, shirts, and other articles of apparel after them in dire confusion. What was the use of being too particular? He had more important matters to occupy his mind. He did not yet know where he was going. But why should he hurry? he asked himself, presently. No one had suspected him yet; no one was likely to interfere with him. Perhaps the story would not come out in the *Mail*, after all. The story!—this was the morning it was to appear; he had forgotten that. He must send out and buy a paper when the sun rose and the world began stirring again. And if the story were there—what, then, should he do? He had a vague foreboding of the consequences—of reporters from the other papers coming to “interview” him; of acquaintances passing him with a curt nod or cutting him dead; of that confounded Thompson rushing up full of voluble curiosity; of all the sickening chatter which so great a scandal would create. No, he could not face all that; it would drive him wild.

But the feeling of utter exhaustion overcame him again, and he flung himself, still dressed, upon the bed, where he lay for an hour or more, perfectly conscious, but incapable of speech or motion, in a kind of waking trance. Vague phantoms flit-

ted through his imagination, and yet he saw with perfect distinctness the first rays of the sun striking the curtained panes, and heard the cheerful tumult increasing in the street without. The story would be told to all the city by this time. He must get away before any one found him; oh yes, he must do that. He rose again, and catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror, saw how pale his face was, how wild and haggard his aspect. If any one should meet him now—well, he would put that quite out of the question. He took the bag which he had packed so hastily and crept down-stairs again. He heard a door close and looked back, expecting to see Thompson hurrying after him—but no, there was no one; he would escape without being seen. He hurried down the steps and turned sharply into a by-street which would lead him across the railway into one of the main thoroughfares, where a man walking along with a bag would attract no attention at all. He had gone some distance before he remembered that he had no money—that his father had stripped him of everything. He thrust his hands into his pockets with tremulous haste. Nothing but a little silver! and how could he leave the city with only this? Why, he must eat and sleep somewhere; the pangs of hunger were becoming very keen at last, in spite of the agitations which had for a time caused him to ignore them. And he had nothing—his father had robbed him relentlessly. He gave a groan of helpless rage at the thought. He could not stand here lamenting, however; he must walk on, he must get somewhere beyond the reach of his enemies.

“How much you want for it?” It seemed as if he were still in a dream when this black-bearded, ill-looking man leaned over the counter to ask him this question. “Vell, vell—how much?”

Oh yes, he knew now; he was trying to pawn the clothes in his bag so that he might have the money to go far from this vile city where every man’s hand was against him. “How much?” Baretta repeated. “I don’t know how much.”

“I give you four tollars and a kevarter—for de whole lot.”

“No, you don’t,” said Baretta, roused to some consciousness of what he was doing by this shameless effort to overreach him.

"Five tollars, and it is shust the very pest I can do."

"I ain't in the mood for charity," the young man said, angrily, as he took up his bag and left the shop.

A little farther on he came to a sign which read, "Second-Hand Clothes Bought and Sold," and it occurred to him that he might as well sell his possessions outright, since he would surely never come back to redeem them.

The dealer was a mild-mannered man, but he examined the garments with a coldly critical eye. "Dress-suits are hard to do much with," he said, plaintively. "My kind of customers don't wear 'em much."

"Well, it cost eighty dollars—it ought to be worth something."

"I can only give you what it's worth to me. Now, this other suit—I might do better with that. The buttons is a little worn, and there's a spot on the vest—but it ain't a bad suit. I might allow you eight dollars on it."

"Eight dollars!" Baretta cried. "I don't appreciate that kind of joke."

"Joke, young feller? There ain't a man in the business would give you as much. I'm only doing it as a kind of favour—understand? If you don't want to leave 'em, take 'em away."

"But the dress-suit—the bag—everything? How much would that be? I'm in a hurry, and I've left my money at home. Perhaps you'd rather lend on them. I'll buy them back."

"Oh, well, if I ain't to have my profit I can't give you so much. You sell 'em to me, and you can buy 'em back to-morrow or when you like, just like anybody else. See?"

"Well, well—give me a decent price. Good God, man! you don't want to crush me, too, just because every one else is conspiring against me. Twenty-five dollars for everything—come, that's cheap enough."

"Twenty-five dollars! Look here, you're lucky to get fifteen. And that's more than I'd offer to any other man."

"Fifteen? Well, give me fifteen," Baretta cried, impatiently. He took the money as it was slowly counted out to him with a trembling hand. "Oh, you old fraud!" he said, as he flung

down the bag and rushed out, slamming the door behind him.

But fifteen dollars would take him away, and after that—well, perhaps he would not care what might happen to him. Where should he go? This was the question which he asked himself as he ate his breakfast in an obscure restaurant not very far from Aragon Street, a place where he had been well known in the old days of poverty and self-sacrifice. He had bought a *Mail*, and the black line—"Is he Baron Smolzew?"—was staring him in the face. He read the story over—although he had read it once in Binney's office—with a morbid fascination. Oh yes, it was all so very plain, so entirely convincing. He might call it a lie, but no one would believe him. His head seemed to be quite clear now; all the wild fancies of the night had vanished; he could think calmly of what he must do. And Yates?—he found a short item about him. "Mysterious Shooting Case!"—there were only a few lines announcing that a well-known member of the Pilgrim Club had been shot while standing at the window of his room in Livingstone Place, and that the police had not yet found any clew to the assailant. Of course they had not! Barretta said to himself, with a triumphant conviction of his own cleverness. But although he was safe enough on that score, he must get away from the city; too many disagreeable episodes would follow the discovery that he was not Baron Smolzew.

Yes, he would take the boat to New York that night—it was the cheapest way he could go, and with only fifteen dollars he must look after every penny. It was after eight o'clock when he left the restaurant, and he walked over to Park Square Station to buy a ticket. He found that the boat-train did not leave until six in the evening. How could he occupy himself until then? And would there not be danger in lingering so long? Some one might be on his track already. Perhaps Yates was not dead—the account in the paper only spoke of him as being wounded—and he might suspect who it was that had fired the shot. Oh no, they should not find him; he would go away at once. He consulted the time-table, and saw that a train for Fall River left at 9.30. He would take it and spend the day at a place where surely no one would think of looking for him.

When he had come to this resolution he went into the waiting-room and took a seat in a remote corner, pulling his hat over his eyes and holding the newspaper which he had been carrying so as to hide his face. He was wishing that there was some way of letting Maud know. She would come with him if he asked her—of that he was sure; and loneliness was terrible when one was haunted by evil dreams. Maud would love him, no matter what he had done; she was not cold and proud and unforgiving like that other woman. Oh, if he could only have Maud to console him! He ought to have gone to her sooner. Well, why should he not go now? There was time enough. No one would find him there; no one would think of looking for him in a dingy tenement in Roxbury. He would run the risk—oh yes, he would do that for Maud's sake. He started up full of this new purpose. But before he had got to the door he remembered that he had only fifteen dollars in his pocket. How could he care for Maud with that? not knowing, too, where he was to get any more when it was gone. His first plan was the best—to go away alone and send for her afterwards. She would follow him; she would be faithful to the last. Poor Maud! whom he had been so willing to abandon.

The motion of the train made him drowsy. He leaned back in the luxurious seat and closed his eyes. But was this sleep—this hideous procession of spectres dancing before his eyes? There was a red light over everything; and then a shot rang out in the still air. After that he fell down—down—over the face of some unfathomable abyss with the dark waters roaring beneath. He awoke with a start to find that the train had stopped, and that some of the passengers were getting out.

"Is this Fall River?" he asked of a man in front of him.

"No, Taunton," was the reply.

Baretta looked at the man a second time and saw that he was shaking his head. Confound the fellow! what did he mean by that? "Oh, you're not Baron Smolzow," he heard him saying.

"I *am* Baron Smolzow!" he cried angrily, leaning forward. Then he remembered that no one must know where he was going, and corrected himself. "No, I'm not," he added.

The man stared at him amazed. "I don't care who you are,"

he said, gruffly, changing his seat. He afterwards told the brakeman that the dark foreign-looking chap was crazy.

But Baretta scowled furiously, and muttered that here was another enemy upon whom he would have to revenge himself. Perhaps it was some one who was dogging his footsteps, who would by-and-by accuse him of killing Yates and try to take him away. But he knew how to get even with him, he thought, as he patted affectionately the revolver in his pocket. His father had done him one service, at least, by leaving that behind. All the people in the car were shaking their heads at him, damn them!—but he would have his revenge upon them all. He was Baron Smolzow still, whatever they might say.

Then all things were as a dream—a dream that lasted for days and nights together.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"I WILL SAVE HIM!"

MAUD went back to her dismal room at Mrs. Jackson's with a heart full of wild anxieties and fears. What could have happened? He had gone away, and had left no word. It was cruel. He knew that she was waiting for him, and still he went away without letting her know. What had she done to be treated like this? She was very angry at first, and tried to forget this faithless lover, who had deceived her for the second time. But no such easy way of relief was open to her. "It was you I loved at the last" he had said as he rushed out into the darkness, oblivious to her appealing cry; he told her to remember that, as if she were likely to forget. And now he had gone, and no one knew where, and had sent her no message at all. Something very terrible must have happened. Perhaps he was out of his head again, and wandering about unconscious of what he was doing. Maud conjured up hundreds of alarming contingencies, and shed many a bitter tear of anguish. Every morning she bought a newspaper and scanned its columns with dismal forebodings. But there was nothing—nothing! Oh, he did not realize how cruel it was to leave her thus without a word.

Of course she knew all about the story that he was not Baron Smolzow. The *Mail* had made its expected sensation, and its rivals were diligently employed in trying to pick up fresh details. Baretta's conduct was scrutinized with pitiless severity. Some of the people who had known him told in "interviews" how they had always suspected him, had always thought him to be an adventurer. Mr. Orrin Fox Allen was especially voluble. The reporter from the *Banner* obtained very full de-

tails from him, including a vivid description of the Baron's bad manners on various occasions. Mr. Allen drew attention to the fact, which reflected great credit upon his powers of discernment, that he himself had noticed the singular resemblance between the Baron and this Herr Emil, and consequently had been fully prepared for the revelation. Incidentally he permitted the reporter to describe with great fulness his own charming house at Brookline, as well as to convey to the readers of the *Banner* a vivid picture of his methods of literary work, and an outline of his plans for enriching still further the intellectual world. Maud remembered Mr. Allen, and how agreeable she thought he was that evening when she met him in the car on the way to Chestnut Hill. But now she felt that she detested him. How mean he was to Frank, to say those horrid things about him! The point of some of Mr. Allen's refined sarcasm was lost on Maud, but she understood well enough that it was horrid. Was this why Frank had gone away, because he could not endure such accusations as these? He ought not to care; he would be far happier to give up all these people who only made fun of him. She pitied Baretta rather than blamed him. Her moral nature was defective in some respects, perhaps, and she could not realize the enormity of his offence. He had only tried to be a baron in order to put himself upon terms of equality with the swells, to whom he was really so far superior. It was silly of him, but where was the great harm in it, after all? Her judgment might not have been quite so lenient had she loved him less.

There were some things in the papers, however, which cut her to the heart. It was the *Banner* which she read, and that journal was the most active of all in its efforts to outdo the *Mail* by adding to the sensation. Consequently it took the paragraph in the *Weekly Packet* which had been so offensive to the friends of Miss Lawrence and constructed out of it a very touching romance. The *Banner* did not care for the opinions of the Back Bay; it made no pretensions to "tone," like the *Mail*. So Mildred's name, despite the attempt of Yates to prevent it, was dragged into the story and made the subject of idle or malicious comment. The pain of knowing it was spared to Philip, but others were not so fortunate. Yet perhaps not even Mildred

herself suffered more acutely under this affliction than Maud did. Oh, how could it be true? she asked herself. But, of course, it was not true—that he had been as good as engaged to Miss Lawrence all the time he was protesting fidelity to her! Had he not thrown away all his prospects, defied his father and everything, simply for her sake? and why should he have done that if he had not loved her? She would not believe those lies in the paper for a moment. Nevertheless, she felt herself forced after a time to yield an unwilling credence to the tale. So much that Baretta had said and done confirmed it. Oh yes—he had loved her at the last, but it was only when he saw himself altogether without hope of winning any one else. Poor Maud could not follow in imagination all the workings of her faithless lover's heart, but she seemed to have somehow an intuitive perception of just what he meant by the wild words that had come from his lips as he rushed out into the darkness. At the last! he had loved her only at the last, when everything had slipped from his grasp; he would not have loved her if he had been free to choose. This was the bitterest pang of all. And yet how could she suspect him, when he had sacrificed so much for her sake at a time when he might have chosen? Thus her thoughts travelled in a never-ending circle of alternate hope and doubt. But whether he loved her or not, she loved him; and she would do anything to help him if he would come back to her and end this miserable suspense. Oh, where was he? and why had he left her without a word?

“Well, are you goin’ to-morrer, or ain’t you?” Mrs. Jackson asked her one evening. “No, I can’t come in. Goodness! how them stairs do tucker me out.”

“Going? Well, I guess I’ll have to go. I can’t stay and pay no four dollars a week—that’s what you said you were going to charge me.”

“Hm! I thought you was waitin’ for your beau,” was Mrs. Jackson’s comment. “It ain’t no four dollars,” she added. “I was put out when I said that.”

“But I must go somewhere—I must do something!” cried Maud. “And I don’t propose to stay with a person who says I ain’t decent.”

"Bother!" Mrs. Jackson cried, sharply. She had not sought the solace of the gin bottle since the evening when she had had one of her "tantrums," as her husband called them, and her not unkindly natural disposition had reasserted itself. "What's the good in takin' a body up so short? You're all straight enough—do you s'pose I can't tell the difference? But what's become of your beau, anyway?"

Maud's lips quivered and the tears rose to her eyes. "Oh, I don't know, I don't know!" she cried. "And I'm so miserable! Oh, Mrs. Jackson, do you think anything has happened to him?"

"How do I know?" But in spite of the unsympathetic form of the response the worthy landlady's interest was awakened. She advanced over the threshold a few steps, and after a moment of hesitation sat down on the edge of the bed. "P'raps if I knew more about it—" Then she paused and looked at Maud expectantly.

No doubt the girl would have preferred another confidant, but it was quite impossible that she should keep all her worries to herself any longer. It would drive her wild to stay on here day after day, tormented by vague fears, yet hoping against hope. And so in a confused and uncertain way, but still plainly enough, she told her story.

"My! my!" was what Mrs. Jackson said when she had heard it. "Well, if I was you I wouldn't have nothin' to do with a feller like that."

"How do you know he's to blame?" asked Maud, indignantly. "I think they've treated him shamefully—pretending to think so much of him, and then putting things in the papers about him just because he isn't a baron. You'd think to hear that Mr Allen talk that butter wouldn't melt in his mouth—the mean thing! to say what he did about Frank. And then, there's Mr. Yates, who's always hated him and tried to ruin him. Frank has told me all about it hundreds of times."

"Yates—where did I hear something about a feller named Yates. That was the name, sure." Mrs. Jackson slowly rubbed one hand back and forth over the pillow, as she tried to remember. "Oh, that's the man as was shot," she said, looking

up. "My husband was readin' all about it to me. He used to work once on his place to Lexington; that's how he was so interested."

"Shot? Mr. Yates shot?" gasped Maud, turning very pale. "Oh, there must be some mistake."

"Well, I guess not. It's all in the paper. An' he knows the family well enough."

Maud sank back in her chair trembling, and hid her face in her hands. What horrible suspicion was this which had assailed her? It was too full of terror to be put into words. And yet he had talked so often of revenge upon Yates—he had gone away that night in such a desperate mood—so unlike himself; quite out of his head. But he had gone, and he had not come back. Why should he stay away unless he had some awful secret to hide? "I—I'm feeling kind of queer," she said, looking up with frightened eyes. She rose to her feet, staggered, and fell to the floor in a dead faint.

Oh, how could she think of such a thing? She would not believe it for a moment. This was what she told herself presently, after Mrs Jackson had left her lying upon the bed, with a stern injunction not to try to get up until she came back. "You're jest beat out with all this worry," Mrs. Jackson had said. It must be because she was beat out that she should cherish such wild ideas, give way to such improbable surmises. Frank could not have done that. He was not a murderer; the very word made her shudder. She would get the papers and read the whole story; it was strange she had not noticed it before: the name of Yates was as familiar to her as it was to Mrs. Jackson. Surely, everything would be explained in the papers. They might have found out by this time who the murderer was, since it could not be Frank. Oh, how wicked she was to suspect him at all, without knowing anything of the circumstances! The man who had treated Frank so badly must have other enemies. But where was Frank himself all this time? and why did he torture her so? She could not keep back the tears as she lay there thinking how wretched she was.

"I guess you'll want to read that about Mr. Yates," Mrs. Jackson was saying. Maud opened her eyes with a start. She must

have been dozing a little, and yet it seemed but a few minutes since the landlady had left her. "You seem to know him."

"Oh no!—but I have heard of him," said Maud, eagerly.

"I wondered how you was a friend of his. But you seem to have a good many friends—among the men. Well, well!" Mrs. Jackson added, seeing the girl flush angrily; "I didn't mean no harm by that. You're awful touchy. You can git the whole story—I keep the paper a good while, and here it is for a week back. The' ain't any satisfaction to me in readin' to-day's news until I've caught up, and sometimes I'm a whole week behind."

"Thank you," Maud said. "It's strange I didn't notice it myself."

"So it's your beau that's the Baron they're talkin' about, is it? Well, I should say he was a bad lot, and it's my advice to you to have no more to do with him."

"Why do you say that?" cried Maud, sitting up. "You've only read those—those lies."

"Oh yes, stick up for him—do! Such fools as women is. Oh, I've seen 'em do it afore—an' they was allus sorry enough arterwards. Don't tell me!" said Mrs. Jackson, sharply, as she turned to go down-stairs again.

Such fools as women were! Well, perhaps she had been one, Maud thought; but if that were so her folly had wrought her misery enough. She had suffered everything for Frank's sake, who did not care for her at all. If he had cared he would not have left her without a word. No, it was that other girl whom he had really loved all along. Even the papers were talking about it, and why should she believe his denials? She recalled, with a heart full of bitterness, the afternoon when she had seen Miss Lawrence coming down the steps—her carriage waiting for her, and that horrible man who called himself Frank's father bowing low before her. A girl like that, rich and real stylish—how absurd it was to suppose that Frank would give her up! It had been nothing but a pretence all the time. He had shrunk back with a look of terror when he saw her coming along the pavement. She had been a fool to be deluded even for a moment. And now Miss Lawrence had cast him off;

there had been an indignant denial of the report of their engagement amid the flood of idle gossip in the *Banner*. Well, he deserved it—she was not sorry for him the least bit. “But oh, Frank, how could you treat me so?” she moaned.

The shooting of Yates! she was forgetting about that. She took up the printed sheets with a trembling hand and scanned them eagerly. There was little in them, after all. It was positive that he had been shot by some one in the street. The wound was in his breast, and he had obviously been standing at the window—which was open—where he had fallen. He had been unconscious, and part of the time delirious, ever since, and it was impossible to get any information from him. Then followed descriptions of his engaging personal qualities, the popularity which he enjoyed at his clubs, his fine estate at Lexington, and the amount of money he had inherited from his father. “It was not known,” asserted the reporter, “that Mr. Yates had an enemy in the world.” Thus the case was a very strange one throughout. No one had seen any visitors entering or leaving his rooms during the evening of the “tragedy”—this was a favourite word with the *Banner*—although the man who occupied the adjoining room suddenly recollected that he had heard loud voices not long before the shot was fired. But he had not paid much attention; it was no business of his to interfere in his neighbour’s quarrels. It was the shot which had first startled him; and then rushing out he had found Mr. Yates, bleeding and unconscious, before the open window. He was very sure that the weapon must have been fired from the street. Both the cabmen who had rushed up-stairs in response to his summons were of the same opinion; and they were positive that they had seen or heard no one leaving the building, although they had hurried in from the corner of the street before they were called, the noise having naturally at once attracted their attention. There were others who had more or less to say about the affair, but their remarks were not enlightening. Thus the space occupied by Philip’s affairs dwindled from day to day. The statement that the ball had missed the left lung, but that the recovery of the patient was still doubtful, was the bulletin of yesterday. And this morning? Oh, she would have to wait

until night, when Mr. Jackson brought home to-day's paper, to know. He might die! was the awful thought that haunted Maud; and could it, oh, could it be Frank who had killed him?

It was nearly six o'clock when she heard Mrs. Jackson's voice calling her from below, and hurried down-stairs in response to the summons. "There's another feller this time," Mrs. Jackson said, grimly, "settin' in my parlour waitin' for you. I wa'n't goin' to send him up—don't you think it."

Maud's heart beat so violently at this announcement that she hardly noticed the slur. She went to the parlour door, but paused a moment with her hand upon the knob. She was conscious of a miserable foreboding of evil. What could any man want with her, unless he had something to say about Frank?

"I'm sorry to trouble you, miss," said her visitor, politely, as she entered. "You're Maud Dolan, I presume? Well, do you know a man who calls himself Baron Smolzow?"

"I know Mr. Baretta," said Maud, stiffly. She was trembling with fright, but she would not let him know, whoever he was.

"Well, it's the same fellow, I guess. Do you know where he is?"

"No."

"Now, look here, miss," said the man, "I don't want to make you any trouble, as I say, but this is a serious case. I'm an inspector of police—"

But Maud interrupted him with a scream. "Oh, he didn't do it! I'm sure he couldn't have done it!"

"Ah!" the inspector said, dryly. "It looks rather black for him, I must say. We'll have to summon you as a witness—when we've got him. But I tell you, miss," he went on, in a kindly tone, "it'll be better for you to tell me the truth."

"The truth?" asked Maud. She was very pale, but her lips were firmly set, and she looked at her questioner defiantly. "There ain't no truth about it. I don't know where Mr. Baretta is, or what you want him for. And if I did I wouldn't tell."

"It's a serious charge, you know—shooting a man, who may die any minute. Oh, I like your pluck, young woman, but you can't fool me."

"I haven't seen Mr. Baretta for a week. I don't know where he is. And I won't believe anything you say against him."

"Very well," said the inspector. "You'll have to tell some day. Good-evening. I shall know where to find you," he added, coming back. "Just you remember that. I'm sorry, miss, that you ain't willing to help us."

But there was some one whom she was willing to help, Maud said to herself after the inspector had gone. She had almost forgotten all her doubts about her lover's fidelity in the presence of this new danger. It was terrible to think of him as a murderer; she felt that she should shrink from him with dread and loathing if he ever came back. Oh, it was better, far better, never to see him again! But they must not find him; that would be worst of all. There must be some way to prevent it—something that even a poor girl like her could do. She went back to her room and pondered long and deeply. Then suddenly she arose with a desperate look, and putting on her hat and sacque went out into the street. "I guess she'll be surprised," Maud muttered bitterly as she hurried along, "but I will save him!" She did not notice that a man who had been standing on the pavement was now following her. She had forgotten all about the inspector's remark that he would know where to find her.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A CRY FOR HELP

"Oh, you needn't tell me!" Daisy said, her eyes glistening with tears and her voice trembling as she spoke. "I know perfectly well who did it—that miserable Baron of yours! whom you've all made fools of yourselves about, though Philip was a gentleman, and he wasn't. And now he's dying, and—and he'll never know how we feel about it," she went on, with a sob. "Oh, Mildred, I'd like to shoot the wretch myself!"

"I—I don't think you're very kind, Daisy," said Mildred, very humbly, and in a voice that trembled a little, too. "If I have made a mistake, I have been punished for it—more than any of the rest of them. You don't suppose I like to have my name bandied about in the papers, do you? As for Phil—Mr. Yates—you've no right to hint that it is my fault."

"I didn't hint any such thing. I don't suppose you knew your Baron was a murderer as well as a swindler."

"Daisy!" Mildred cried. "We don't know anything about it—we have no right to suspect him. It's bad enough without that. And now that Philip—Mr. Yates—may be dying—Oh, Daisy!" and here Mildred began to cry, "he will never know—"

"That you forgave him, dear," said Daisy, gently. "That is, if there was anything to forgive," she could not help adding.

But Mildred rose hastily, and dried her eyes, a little angry that she should thus have betrayed herself. "That isn't what I meant at all," she murmured faintly. She remembered now that she had of late more than half suspected Daisy of being in love with Philip herself, and the recollection was an additional

source of embarrassment. It would be a part of the irony of Fate if this were so.

Perhaps Daisy, too, was a little vexed with her friend, for some reason or other. It could not be because Mildred still cared for Philip, and suffered so acutely from the reflection that she had been unkind to him. She had herself been trying to reconcile them all along. And yet she was conscious of a wretched feeling of dissatisfaction. "I never could understand you," Daisy said a little sharply as the two went off to dress for dinner.

But even Daisy did not know all that Mildred had suffered on Philip's account. If she had really misjudged him, she had atoned for it. She had loved him all along, although she had said that she could not forgive him. It is commonly thought that love must mean forgiveness, in spite of numberless instances to the contrary. Our bitterest judges are our friends, not our enemies; because in disappointing the ideal which our friends have cherished of us we do them a wrong hard to overlook, while our enemies have no such ideal, and take a certain satisfaction in finding their suspicions justified. He was a wise man who said that a man's worst foes shall be they of his own household. It was the very sincerity of her love for Philip which had made Mildred's disappointment in him so keen, which had made first his indifference and then his anger so exasperating. It was, perhaps, impossible that he should see why a single quarrel must separate them forever, but it had set its ineffaceable mark upon her soul; and what was the use of merely pretending that one could forget? But in the shadow of death all the perspectives of life, all its relative values, seem somehow to be changed. To think that Philip was dying, and that he would never know how much she loved him!—this it was that tortured Mildred, who was helpless to save him. She did not understand the change, but she knew that she would give all she had in the world to be able to whisper in his ear her brief but potent confession. If he should live, after all! but that was something which seemed to her anxious imaginings quite incredible. Oh yes—she had been punished only too severely, and there was no escape from her punishment. The doctors had pretended to be hopeful;

they said he had a good constitution ; but what did they know—how could they tell? And he would die and never know—this was the burden of that half confession to Daisy.

What she did not tell Daisy was that she had been to Philip's rooms, and that Philip's mother had rebuffed her cruelly. It was one of those opportunities for revenge which only the weaker sex is strong enough to take advantage of. Daisy had been twice to inquire after him, and had seen Mrs. Yates, who had come in from Lexington because Philip could not be moved at present. But Mildred's anxiety could not be satisfied by her friend's reports. She felt that she herself must go ; perhaps she thought of it as in some way an atonement for the past. It was not a pleasant task, but she would not shrink from it. She knew that Philip's mother cherished no amiable feelings towards her, but surely at such a moment the past might be forgotten. Once, at least, she and Philip had loved each other, and it would be monstrous if she should let him go down to his grave and make no sign of reconciliation. But no, oh no !—it could not be so bad as that !—he would live, and would know that she had forgiven him.

It was anything but easy, however, to go to Livingstone Place and ask for Mrs. Yates. Mildred waited below in the carriage, sending up the footman with a bunch of roses and a note. "Dear Mrs. Yates," it ran, "may I see you just for a moment? I am very anxious—this is a great grief to all his friends." It was not very coherent, but when Mrs. Yates looked at the signature she knew what it meant, and for a moment she had an inclination to relent. Perhaps she had been somewhat unjust to the girl, after all ; she knew herself what it meant to be disappointed in Philip. Then the thought that this terrible thing might never have happened but for Mildred hardened her heart again. The broken utterances of Philip's delirious moments had made it all very plain to her. Just who the would-be murderer was, or what his motive had been, she did not know ; but it was for Mildred's sake that her son had incurred his enmity. It was this girl who had changed him so, and who might be the means of taking him away from her forever. So Mrs. Yates sat down and wrote, "I beg you will excuse me," and sent the man

back with this answer. She would have liked to bid him return the roses, only that she could not humiliate Mildred before a servant. But she threw them into the fire and saw their fresh loveliness shrivel and blacken with the sweet consciousness that she was having her revenge.

Poor Mildred! she drove away with burning cheeks, angry with Philip's mother, and with herself for inviting this rebuff. How cruel, how unjust it was to treat her so! and now he would never even know that she was sorry. She shed a few hot tears of mingled grief and vexation. Of course she would not tell Daisy what had happened; she would a thousand times rather suffer under the imputation of being cold and unforgiving. But it was a little hard that Daisy should have had a privilege which she had been refused. Philip would think that only Daisy cared enough for him to come and ask after him. But what difference did that make? If he lived, it would be Daisy's part to console him. If he lived!—oh, but he must live; she could not bear to think of that other dreadful possibility. And then to have Daisy reproach her for not caring! No wonder that she was vexed with her friend, and went down to dinner feeling very miserable indeed. "A young person?" she repeated, mechanically, when the man came in just as dessert was being served. "And waiting in the hall? Take her into the reception-room, and say I will see her presently. Perhaps it is one of your pensioners, papa," she added, trying to speak lightly.

Meanwhile Maud was waiting for her with anxious expectancy, clasping and unclasping her hands nervously and listening with a throbbing heart to the solemn ticking of the tall clock at the foot of the staircase. The strange luxuriousness of her surroundings oppressed her. Perhaps she had done wrong in coming. And yet how could she stay away when so much was at stake? It was all she could do for Frank's sake—to appeal to this young lady whom he had loved, and who was rich and powerful and could help him. Maud hated her because she had tried to take him away; nothing could make her believe that she had not tried to do that. Nevertheless, she would save him by appealing to Miss Lawrence. Oh, it was impossible that Frank could be a murderer! But he was poor and friendless, and the

law was never just to such as he. How very rich Miss Lawrence must be to live in such a beautiful house! Maud reflected bitterly upon the hopelessness of her own position as she sat there and waited. Was it strange that Frank should have wanted to give her up? But he had loved her at the last—oh yes, she would always remember that. And she would tell her so—the girl who had despised him, although she had been so willing to rob another of his love. When Mildred came into the room, however, she merely rose and stared at her, incapable of speech—Miss Lawrence was so dignified, she was so far above the level of a poor shop-girl.

“What can I do for you?” Mildred asked, graciously.

Then Maud’s long pent-up emotion found utterance. “For me? Nothing!” she said, with a glance of sullen defiance. “Do you think I’d come to you for that? But, oh, it’s him that’s in trouble—there’s been a man looking for him, and if they find him— He didn’t do it; I tell you he didn’t! You took him away from me, and I hate you!” Maud cried, stamping her foot passionately; “and once I thought I’d rather have died than come to you to ask for anything. But to think that he should be in trouble like this, and all for my sake—and no one knows where he is—he may be dead, though you wouldn’t care for that! Oh, can’t you do something to help me find him and save him from them?”

This wild appeal was quite unintelligible to Mildred. Her first thought was that this strange young woman must be crazy. “I—I don’t understand you,” she said at last, faintly. “You must have made some mistake.”

“Don’t turn away from me—hear what I have to say. I guess you ain’t such a great lady that it will hurt you to listen. They think he shot Mr. Yates, but it ain’t true—I tell you it ain’t true!” And Maud began to cry bitterly.

“Shot Mr. Yates? Who shot Mr. Yates? And who are you, and why do you come here and talk to me like this?”

“Because I love him! Oh, I ain’t ashamed of it—not one bit. He’s worth more than all the fine gentlemen in the world. I don’t care if he ain’t a baron—that’s not his fault. But you—what do you care whether he’s alive or dead? I guess I

might as well go," said Maud, with a pathetic assumption of dignity, "since you won't do anything to help me."

"No—wait," Mildred said, putting out a detaining hand. "It must be Mr. Baretta you are talking about. You are rather impertinent," she added, coldly, "but I suppose you hardly realize it. If you would tell me the whole story—"

"Impertinent!" cried Maud. "Well, I don't care if I am. Oh yes," she went on angrily, "you were willing enough to take him away from me once, but now you don't care what becomes of him."

"I can do nothing to help either you or him while you go on in this way. If he is in trouble—well, I am sorry for you both. And—and if it was he who shot Mr. Yates," exclaimed Mildred, wrath flaming from her eyes, "I hope he'll be made to suffer for it! What did you come to me for? I'll do nothing, no, not the first thing, for a swindler and a murderer!"

"How dare you?—how dare you talk so about him?" Maud's voice was loud and shrill as she asked the question, and Daisy, coming through the hall, heard it and stopped. "He was fool enough to care for you—that's all the harm he did. But I'll save him in spite of you! No matter what any one says, I love him and I'll save him—though I am a poor girl and not a fine lady."

And Maud turned to go. She would humiliate herself no more, she thought, trying to choke back the sobs that convulsed her, to wipe away the tears that blinded her. All the world was alike; there was no pity for those who fell by the way. Why had she come, only to be repulsed? She might have known how it would be. But at the door some one took her by the arm and held her back.

"You poor girl!—what is the matter?" Daisy asked.

"Nothing—let me go," said Maud, trying to free herself.

"Mildred!—don't you understand?" cried Daisy. "I couldn't help hearing what she said. She has something to tell us about Mr. Baretta—and no matter what he has done, I'm sorry for her. Don't go away; Miss Lawrence didn't quite understand."

Maud looked up and saw through her tears two piteous blue eyes gazing into hers. Who was this other girl, not like *her*,

but kind and sympathizing? "Oh, it's nothing to you!" she sobbed.

But Daisy put her arm about Maud, and tenderly led her back and made her sit down. "I know Mr. Baretta," she said, "and if he treated you badly—"

"He didn't treat me badly. I wasn't good enough for the likes of him once; but I'll save him, no matter what you say. They're trying to find him—they say he shot Mr. Yates. But you mustn't believe it. How could he do that? He was out of his head—he came to see me like that, and then he went away—and oh! he may be dead or something, for no one knows where he is."

"There—there; don't cry so," said Daisy, soothingly. She saw at once what Mildred had not seen, perhaps because her sympathies were so much more easily aroused. This was some girl in his own class whom Baretta had loved, and whose fidelity to him had survived every shock. It was pitiful to think how she had been deceived. But whatever he had done it was not her fault, and surely a way might be found to help her. She was a little vexed with Mildred for not understanding the case better. "The poor girl isn't to blame," Daisy said, looking up. She had been bending over Maud, gently stroking her hand with an irresistible impulse of consolation.

"You are so heedless, Daisy," Mildred said, shrugging her shoulders. "I'm sorry for her—but what can we do? I don't suppose you want to interfere—if he is really guilty."

Daisy, however, was a very inconsistent person. She had all the feminine dislike of logic; and although she had expressed her willingness to shoot Baretta herself, and was very indignant when she thought how much Philip was suffering through him, she could not turn this forlorn girl away without trying to help her. "I want to interfere—for her sake," Daisy said, defiantly. "Of course, if you don't wish her to stay, she can come home with me."

"Nonsense!" said Mildred, irritably. She was really beginning to feel a little sorry for her strange visitor, although she was at a loss how to show it. She could go and talk to poor people easily enough, and take them food, or give them money.

But a common girl who had been impertinent to her—and who knew that she wasn't a bad girl?—was much more difficult to deal with. "I think we had better go up-stairs," Mildred observed presently, "and if this—this young woman can tell us a connected story—I'm sure I tried hard enough to get her to do that—but she wasn't exactly respectful—"

"Come," said Daisy, taking Maud's hand, "Miss Lawrence didn't quite understand, at first; but she will help you—we both will."

So Maud came away feeling somewhat comforted, after all. It seemed much easier to talk to this other young lady, who was not so cold and dignified as Miss Lawrence, but who listened with encouraging nods, as if she had known about Arragon Street and the Dolan family all her life. She didn't act a bit like one of the swells, although the card which Maud took with a promise to go and see her soon had Commonwealth Avenue on it; Maud was not skilled enough in social exigencies to see that it was an even number, and that one who lived on that side of the street might not be so very much of a swell, in spite of a fine house. Miss Tredwell—Frank had never spoken of her, although she said that she knew him. But Maud could see easily enough that she didn't like him—that she didn't believe in him. How unjust of her! and yet Maud liked her, because she was so kind. She had cried a little over Maud's story, and had kissed her when she said good-bye. Perhaps all the real ladies were not stuck up, as she had thought. No one would doubt that Miss Tredwell was a real lady. Miss Lawrence had tried to be kind, too, and she was no longer angry with her. She wasn't so pretty as Baretta tried to make out; Maud's sense of rivalry still lingered and disposed her to be unjust; but she, too, had been sorry, and had promised to do anything she could—even for Frank, if it could be proved that he was innocent. Innocent! Maud repeated to herself. Of course he was—why should they suspect him? And Miss Tredwell had told her that Mr. Yates would surely get better, though perhaps this was only to console her. And yet down deep in her heart there was anything but a feeling of confidence. She remembered only too well what Frank had said about getting even with his enemies. And she

knew what a dreadful temper he had. But to kill a man ! could she love him if he had done that ? Oh no, no ! she said to herself with a shudder ; or if she still loved him, she could not forgive him. He would never do such a thing—never ! unless he were quite out of his head. And he had been that when he rushed away in the darkness on the evening when Mr. Yates was shot. They wouldn't punish him if he was out of his head. That, however, did not make the situation any less miserable. And where was he now ?—dead himself, perhaps, and she would never see him again. Her heart ached with its burden of grief as she wearily climbed the stairs to her dismal little room.

It was not until she had lit the gas that she turned and saw Baretta sitting there. She started back with a shriek, like one whose imagination conjured up some awful spectre. "Frank ! oh, Frank !" she cried, when at last she was capable of speech, "where have you been ? and what have you done ?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MAUD HEARS THE TRUTH

SHE read his answer in his face before he spoke. His whole look was that of the hunted criminal; so white and haggard was he, so full of anguish and despair. His eyes were dull, his lips twitched nervously; and his hand trembled as he pushed back his hair from his forehead with a gesture of utter exhaustion. "I've been in hell," he said at last.

"Oh, Frank, Frank!" Maud cried, helplessly wringing her hands, "why did you come here? You must get away at once. They'll find you, and then—oh, tell me it isn't true! say it isn't true, and I'll believe you and go anywhere with you!"

"True? what isn't true? See here, Maud, I—I've been sick. I didn't know what I was about, and I wandered off. Who's going to find me? I haven't done anything to be afraid of. You—you don't seem very glad to see me, Maud."

"But I have been so worried about you. Why did you go away, and never let me know? And, oh, Frank! if you haven't done anything wrong, why—why should you look like that?"

"Like that?" He rose then, and went to the glass and gazed anxiously at the image of himself that he saw there. "Well," he said, rather fretfully, "any one could see I'd been sick. A week—a whole week—wandering about the devil knows where. And not myself all the time," he added, with a cunning smile. "How do I know where I've been or what I've been doing?"

A feeling of loathing—oppressive, deadly—overcame Maud as she saw that smile. She could not understand it at all. She loved him—oh, what had she not been willing to do for him?—but now she shrank from him and loathed him.

"Well, Maud," Baretta said, advancing towards her, "aren't you going to come with me now? I said I'd come back, you know—and I've kept my word, haven't I? You don't seem to understand yet, but I will explain everything to you—oh yes, there will be plenty of time for that. Maud! what's the matter?" he cried, as she eluded his out-stretched hand.

"Don't touch me!" she gasped. "Oh, Frank, I don't know what it means, but when you come near me— Why don't you tell me the truth? Why do you keep me in misery?"

"The truth? Look here, Maud, are you out of your head, too? What's the matter with you, that you shrink away from me? Damnation!" cried Baretta, in a sudden burst of anger, "have you gone back on me—listening to their vile stories, instead of believing what I tell you? Very well, then, I'll go. I'll leave you for good, and you'll never see me again. I wouldn't marry you now if you got down on your knees to me—no, by Heaven! I wouldn't. I suppose," he added, with a sneer, "some new fellow has turned up since I've been gone."

"How dare you talk of such a thing, Frank?" she went on, trying to be calm. "I see it all, now. I wouldn't believe it at first, but something tells me it was you."

Baretta flung himself down in the chair with a gesture of impatience. "I'll stay just long enough to find out what in thunder you mean."

"You must go, Frank; they may track you here any minute. Oh, why didn't I think of that sooner?" Maud cried, greatly agitated. "The man came here once—the policeman—and perhaps he knows you are here now. Oh, go, go, Frank! Get away somewhere! Don't let them take you to prison! I—I will try to help you afterwards. Write to me when you are safe—but go now!"

"I'll be damned if I stir a step! Go? I guess I've had enough of going—don't you see how tired I am? Why should policemen come here to find me? There's no reason to be afraid of them," Baretta said, defiantly. Nevertheless, there was a look of fear in his eyes. "You wouldn't betray me, would you?" he asked.

“Oh, I'll help you—but go! They have found out, somehow, and they will take you to prison.”

“No doubt you want to get rid of me, but I sha'n't go until I'm good and ready. I don't think it's very kind of you, Maud, to treat me like this.”

“Kind!” cried Maud, piteously. “Frank, Frank, you are breaking my heart! Oh, if you'll tell me that it isn't true what they say, I'll believe you. I'll do anything for you—I'll go anywhere with you.”

“How can I tell what you're driving at? Why don't you speak out?”

Maud wandered irresolutely about the room before she replied. Then she faced him once more. “Did you shoot Mr. Yates?” she asked.

The question took him by surprise, and for a minute he lay back in the chair staring at her. “Yates? What the devil do you know about Yates?” he said at last, petulantly.

“Was it you who shot him?”

“Well, what if I did?” He rose with fury in his face, and, seizing her by the shoulder, shook her violently. “By Heaven! I'll shoot you, too, if you betray me.”

“Let me alone! how dare you?” cried Maud, angrily. Oh, how she had been deceived in him all along! That he should threaten even her, who had loved him and had been faithful to him in spite of everything! She had tried so hard not to think ill of him—to believe that if he had really committed any crime it was because he was out of his head. It was a bitter thing to have all her illusions thus swept away; and the bitterness of it increased her wrath. “Oh, you dirty coward!” she burst forth; “how dare you touch me?”

“Coward!” It was the word which Mildred had used, but somehow on Maud's lips it stung him even more than it had then. “Coward! I'll teach you a lesson—how to treat me decently next time!” He seized her once again, so roughly that she could not help crying out; then hurled her staggering against the wall. “I'll show you what it is to betray me!” he cried, furiously.

But Maud had fallen to the floor, and she still laid there help-

lessly, staring up at him with a white face, in which there was pain but no terror. "Well, why don't you shoot me too, as you said you would?" she asked, suppressing the moan that rose to her lips. "I don't care—now," she added, with a piteous sob.

Baretta's wrath had had time to cool. He realized what he had done—what a brute he had been. "I—I didn't mean to hurt you, Maud," he muttered, in a shamefaced way. "Confound it, I don't know what's the matter with me—everything upsets me. But what business had you to call me a coward? I should think you were the coward, to go back on me when I'm in trouble. Maud, why don't you get up instead of lying there and looking at me so?"

"I—I can't get up—I'm hurt so—my foot—" And then poor Maud fainted away.

"How did it happen?" Mrs. Jackson asked, as she responded to Baretta's summons. "Here, you run for the doctor," she said to Mr. Jackson, who had followed her into the hall. "How did it happen?" she repeated.

"Oh—oh, she fell—she must have stumbled against something—"

"I guess 'twas your fist, then," Mrs. Jackson said. "Why don't you stay away and leave her alone? She says you're goin' to marry her, but if she's wise she'll send you about your business. I don't see but what she gets into trouble every time you come. Oh, I hain't no patience with these furriners!" she muttered as she hurried up-stairs.

Baretta's dark face flushed with anger at Mrs. Jackson's words, but he made no reply. The result of his latest outburst had indeed frightened him. That he should have struck Maud and hurt her so badly!—Maud, who had never had anything but love and kindness for him. It was true that she had provoked him; but then he ought not to have minded. Some one had been prejudicing her against him. She had spoken about a policeman coming. A policeman! then they must suspect him already. He had laughed to think that there was no clew, but now this certainty had vanished. How had they found out? who could have told them? Maud knew, and wanted him to go, away at once. Oh yes, no doubt she would be glad to be rid of

him now! She cared for him no longer; she had as good as told him so. But he would stand his ground. Let them arrest him if they dared. No one had seen him fire the shot, and he was not afraid of mere suspicions. Besides, he was not sure that he wished to escape. Even Maud had deserted him. He had no friend but that tiny weapon his father had left him, which might still do him a service.

He had to help Mrs. Jackson lift Maud to the bed, although the girl, who had quickly recovered consciousness, shuddered and closed her eyes as he touched her. He saw this and ground his teeth in useless fury. That Maud should shrink from him in this way, as if there were infection in his presence! Perhaps it was the bitterest humiliation of all that he had suffered. He walked to the window and stood there looking out while Mrs. Jackson bent over Maud and asked her how she felt now.

"My boot—take it off! oh, be careful!"

"You'll have to cut the leather," said Baretta, coming forward and offering his pocket-knife.

"All right, young man," Mrs. Jackson said, sharply. "And you jest go down-stairs and wait till you're wanted—or leave if you like. I'm goin' to undress her and git her so as she'll be comfortable."

"Wait a moment," said Maud. "There—it's easier now the boot is off. I—I want to speak to him—all alone—before he goes," she added, looking up with eyes full of entreaty.

"Oh, that means you don't want me." And Mrs. Jackson gave vent to a short hard laugh.

"Don't be mad about it, Mrs. Jackson. It's—it's only a word—and I may not ever see him again."

"Why not? what are you talking about?" Baretta cried, impatiently. He waited until Mrs. Jackson had left the room, closing the door behind her, and then said, "You know I didn't mean to hurt you, Maud. I was angry, and didn't realize what I was doing. I—I have been ill—my head troubles me—I don't understand why, but it aches—oh, how it aches!"

"I am sorry for you, Frank," said Maud, faintly; "and I cannot talk much now. All I want to ask you is, if—if you shot him? Oh, Frank, I don't want to believe it—I don't, indeed!"

Baretta scowled at her resentfully before he answered. "He was my enemy—I had my revenge on him," he said, at last. "If you intend to go back on me—"

"Oh, Frank!" Maud said again; and there were tears rolling slowly down her cheeks. "To think that you should do—that!"

"Curse him!" Baretta cried, furiously. "I'd do it again—yes, I would, no matter what the consequences were. It was he that was against me all along—that went to her with his foul lies and ruined me. It was just and right that I should punish him for it. And you—who pretended to love me—"

"I guess you are the one that did the pretending, Frank," said Maud, smiling bitterly. "But what's the use of talking about it now? I'll help you any way I can, though I don't see how—what can a poor girl like me do?—and she—Miss Lawrence—perhaps she'll help you, too. She—or Miss Tredwell."

Baretta scowled more savagely than ever when he heard this name. "Miss Tredwell? what do you know about her?"

"I went to see her—her and Miss Lawrence. Oh, I could not bear to sit here and wait, and not try to do anything for you."

"What! you went to them? Curse you, you've done me more harm than all the rest. Why didn't you send for the police at once? The police! Oh, I dare say they'll be here soon. I suppose you want me to wait for them."

"No, no!" Maud said, trying to rise, but sinking back with a sharp cry of pain. "Oh, I had forgotten—no, you must go at once, before they find you. Go, go! and send me word somehow where you are, and we will—I will help you. Oh, Frank, it breaks my heart to say good-bye—to send you away like this—but what else can I do? I would not have believed it—no, not for a moment—if you hadn't told me. Go—I can't talk to you any more!" cried poor Maud, with a sob.

He stood looking down on her for a moment. There was an expression of devilish malignity on his face that made her cower and tremble before him. "Oh, I'll pay you up, too!" he hissed at last. "Damn you! if I go to hell I'll take you with me!"

Maud saw the gleam of the revolver as he aimed it at her. But she was too much overcome by terror even to scream. A hundred wild imaginings possessed her in that single moment; her

supreme thought was that death, however fearful, would at least bring all her miseries to an end. Then suddenly a piercing shriek was heard and voices—Mrs. Jackson's voice, and her husband's, and that of a strange man. The tumult aroused her suspended faculties, and once more she tried to rise. "Oh, save him! save him!" she cried.

But Baretta, turning quickly, and flourishing his weapon, made a bolt for the door. Mrs. Jackson screamed again, and Mr. Jackson showed remarkable agility in stepping to one side. The stranger alone tried to interfere, and Baretta, by a sudden flank movement, managed to elude his grasp, and so gained the stairway in safety. Another curse, a wild cry of rage, burst from his lips as he hurried down. Then the banging of the door was heard below.

"Chase him! Oh, you stupid brute, why don't you catch him?" Mrs. Jackson cried, addressing her husband.

"I don't see any good of that now," grumbled he.

"No," interrupted the other man, "the best thing you can do is to inform the police. He is a dangerous person to have at large, I should say. And now," he added, turning to Maud, "we will look at this young lady's foot, if you please. I am the doctor," he said, in a kindly tone. "Is the pain very great?"

But after the doctor had gone, and Mrs. Jackson had discussed the exciting episode from every possible point of view, and had gone down-stairs to wait for her husband, in order to discuss it again, Maud, lying alone in the dim light of a single candle, was saying to herself that now, indeed, everything that made life worth living was over for her, and that death would be a welcome relief. But not by his hand! though she had thought of it as that, even while his arm was raised to kill her, she was only too thankful that he had been prevented from committing that crime. "Oh, Frank, Frank!" she moaned, feeling how powerless words were to relieve the pent-up tide of emotion, and yet unable to withstand it in utter silence. "Oh, Frank, Frank! that you could have the heart to do it." The culmination of all her anxieties was far more tragic than her wildest fancies could have predicted. A murderer!—not out of his head, but sane enough, and a murderer! What could be worse

than that? How could there be any more poignant misery for her to endure?

Poor Maud! It was not strange that she should think the worst had befallen, that she should imagine the future to hold for her no share of happiness whatever. Her love for Baretta had been the controlling motive of her life for so long, that in the first shock of finding it suddenly taken away all the world seemed to fall about her in ruins. Oh, there was nothing more for her to live for—no, nothing. She had given him up once, to be sure; but then she had this love to console her, and the memory of what had been sweet as well as bitter in the past. But now there was no hope of consolation at all. She could not now think of him as happy in some sphere higher than her own. He had thrown everything away in his passion—love and perhaps life itself. They were hunting him down because he was a murderer: he had tried to kill her, who had been faithful to him while he himself was faithless, who had wanted to save him in spite of all. To think she might have died by his hand! She was not afraid of death—what more had life to offer her?—but to die in that way would have been an intolerable agony. She was thankful that he had not that sin upon his soul. But now—what did it matter to her whether she lived or died? It was natural enough that she should ask herself this question. She could not realize how impossible her dream of happiness with him would have been under any circumstances; she could not yet be grateful for the very rudeness of the awakening. But she had passed through the blackest crisis of her whole career, and who should say that happiness would never come to her hereafter? Existence might have an altered meaning, but at twenty hope seldom flees forever. Poor Maud! She cried herself to sleep that night, and she awoke in the morning with a heavy heart. And there was still another moment of supreme anguish to come—the moment when she learned Baretta's fate. Nevertheless, although we mortals are fond of saying that this or the other circumstance is unendurable, we somehow manage to endure it; and if the scar remains, if the old wound throbs again with pain, we live and laugh—and sometimes even love once more.

CHAPTER XXXIX

HEMMED IN

BARETTA ran down the street, with the revolver still in his hand, casting now and then a backward glance in the fear of possible pursuers. It was not until he was some distance from the house, and had turned into one of the main thoroughfares, that he thrust the weapon into his pocket, and slackened his pace to a rapid walk. His heart was beating violently, and the perspiration was streaming down his face. Where should he go now? What should he do? One thing was certain—he would not wait for his enemies to hunt him down. And yet how could he escape them? He had no money; he no longer had any friends. Even Maud was false to him. Maud! he had tried to kill Maud, but they had prevented him. He was rather glad of that, because, after all, she had loved him once. The worst of it was that a woman had screamed, so that all the world might hear. Oh yes, they would have reason enough to accuse him now, to call him a murderer, as Maud herself had done! A murderer?—how was it that Baron Smolzow had become a murderer? He could not understand it at all. And to try to kill Maud, who was in pain and trouble, who had told him that he was breaking her heart! Surely he was not quite himself to think of such a thing. And now he had nowhere to go, no place of refuge, but must die like a rat in a trap. Death! the word had a horrible sound; why should he be thinking about death? Maud was not dead; he had done her no harm. Oh yes, he was glad of that; he could not have borne the thought that he had killed Maud. It was different with Yates, who was his enemy and who had deserved his fate. Justice demanded that he

should die, and although he was still alive, justice would surely be satisfied. But not Maud!—no, although she had treated him so badly.

The night was chilly, and a fine mist was driving in his face, but he did not mind that. Curse these people! how they jostled against him as they hurried along the pavement. What were so many of them doing in the streets? What evening was it? He had lost all count of time, that vague, wild dream of his had lasted so long. Oh, he knew now; it must be Saturday evening—all the shops were still open. He was dreaming no longer. He had work to do that would keep him awake. And yet had he slept at all since he had seen that black figure outlined against the square of yellow light, and had heard the shot ringing out in the still night air? Then everything had become vague and indistinct. He was wandering about in the darkness, under the black walls of the sleeping houses. Then there were great branches tossing in the wind above his head, and he heard a voice telling him of the blind ways that were provided for such as he.

This pale, cold glow—this gray, uncertain light—was it the dawn? They must not find him here. No, he would go away, and without Maud, whom he had loved at the last. The bare, brown fields went flying by as he gazed from the window of the car. But he must get away from these people who were shaking their heads at him and saying that he was not Baron Smol-zow. It was all a lie—why should they believe a fellow like Yates? But Yates would tell no more lies. How that yellow light blinded him! The black figure was there no longer, and how it blinded him! Now it was turning to red—all the air was red about him; and he was walking on and on, somewhere through a desolate land without a human habitation. Well, he was rid of those people who shook their heads at him; he heard no longer the roar of the train. It was quiet—oh, as still as death—out there in the fields; quiet only for those whispers all around him from invisible lips. He is not Baron Smol-zow—curse them! how do they know?

It is warm in here—in this drowsy corner of the little country inn. Yes, how very drowsy it is. Sleep—that is what he

needs. Now he is climbing some quaint old stairs. He keeps on climbing even in the darkness that follows. . . . Ah, how much better he feels! how clear his brain is at last! There are no more voices whispering to him: no one says that he is not Baron Smolzew. The days go by; he likes to linger here, where no one will think of finding him. But one night the fit is on him again and he wanders out, and when he comes to himself he is far away, faint and weary, in a strange place. What has happened to him? Perhaps Maud would know—Maud whom he loves and whom he had almost forgotten. Maud! he will go to her. . . . And now he is in the street, and she is lying there—in pain because he hurt her—he who loved her. What had he done that for? Poor Maud! whom he would never see again.

Oh yes—it must be Saturday night, Baretta said to himself, as he walked down the brilliantly lighted street. He heard a clock striking ten, but the shops were still open, and men and women were going in and out, rich for the time in a week's wages. And it was for them he had wanted to sacrifice all—for the complaining millions who surged by him in a pitiless procession, with no thought of the misery he had undergone. They had a week's wages, while he walked on with empty pockets, faint and despairing for lack of food. He had spent his very last cent that morning for a single roll, and here it was night, and he was hungry and homeless. There was no one in all the world to whom he could go: his last friend was Maud, and he had lost her. It would have been sweet to die—with her; but now he must die alone. How, indeed, could he live? He was young, it is true, and able to work; but that was what they would not let him do—these people who were conspiring against him. Maud had said they were trying to find him, because they knew that he had shot Yates. How could they know, when no one had seen him do it? Well, it was no matter; he would baffle them all yet. They had hemmed him in, but he knew of a way out. The police! let the police try to take him if they dared!

Now a strange feeling of giddiness began to overcome him, and he staggered slightly, running against a man with a basket

on his arm, who was coming in the opposite direction. "Look out! you damn drunken fool!" cried the man sharply.

"Drunk!" retorted Baretta, striking out savagely with his right arm, "I'm no more drunk than you are."

But the blow missed its mark, and the very exertion—so weak was he—sent him reeling against the wall. The man stared at him contemptuously a moment and then passed on; while Baretta, after steadying himself with difficulty, groped his way to the next doorway, where he sank down upon the step, and huddling wretchedly in the darkest corner hid his face in his hands. He could feel the tears trickling between his closed fingers as he sat there. Oh, it might make any one cry to be so wretched! And he had done nothing to deserve his wretchedness—nothing except wreaking vengeance upon his enemy, as he had a right to do.

The noise of laughter aroused him presently. Two girls had stopped directly in front of the doorway, and in a minute two men joined them. The girls might have seemed attractive at a single glance; they had bright eyes and red cheeks; the hair of one was bright auburn in hue, while the frizzled locks of the other flamed out in a suspiciously radiant yellow. The men were young—of the type that Baretta had seen so often in the neighbourhood of Arragon Street. They wore ill-fitting slop clothes, highly-coloured neckties, and round-top hats several seasons out of date. Their ungloved hands were red, their faces covered with irregular blotches.

"Hullo, Jenny!" cried one. "What are you doing here?"

"Well, what business is that of yours, freshy?" asked Jenny.

"This is Mr. Watson," the young man continued, plucking his companion by the sleeve. "I say," he added, in a stage whisper, "who's your lady friend? Come and have something to drink on me."

"Well, now you're shoutin'—ain't he, Blanche?" Jenny cried, approvingly. "You must have struck it rich up your way."

"Oh, I don't hang out at Arragon Street now, Jenny. Say, I guess you wouldn't go back there, would you?"

"You're too damn fresh," was Jenny's retort. "Come on with you—do you think me and my lady friend can stand here

all night gabbing with the likes of you? Oh, say," Jenny added, clutching at her skirt as he awkwardly stuck out his elbow in token of his willingness to escort her, "do the Dolans live there yet? I saw Maud—on the street—not long ago—"

Maud! Baretta started at the name, but Jenny's voice died away in the distance, and his eyes rested only on vacancy. Maud! Who was the girl who had been talking about Maud?—a common creature like that, too. He was conscious of a queer feeling of compunction as he wondered if Maud herself would ever have to come to this—to the final degradation which was the lot of so many of the complaining millions. Oh no! no! Maud was a good girl, though she had gone back on him at the last. What did it matter, after all? He was through with friendship, with love—yes, with life itself. His enemies had hemmed him in, and there was but one way out. And yet it was strange, he told himself, as he stumbled to his feet, that a girl like that should have been talking about Maud. It would have been better, far better, if that tiny weapon in his pocket had had time to do its work. Ah, that was the only way in which the problem of existence could be settled! And it was so simple, so effectual! "There are blind ways provided"—yes, and one hemmed in by his enemies could find such a way easily enough. Yes, yes! Baretta muttered, shaking his head, as he came out into the light again, stronger somehow in the anticipation of the thing that remained for him to do. He would find one of the blind ways! but first there was one more enemy—nay, two—to be punished. And he knew how to reach them; oh yes, he knew that well enough!

"Look out there!" some one was shouting. Then some one else plucked him sharply by the arm and held him back as a cab rattled by. "Do you want to be run over?" He heard the question, but he did not answer it. The mist was thicker now, and the glare of the electric lights gave it a dazzling radiance. The huge street-cars proceeded slowly along with clanging notes of warning, the carriages wound in and out between them, and two meeting throngs of theatre-goers homeward bound blocked the narrow pavements. Baretta cast a bewildered glance about him and then turned back. Had he forgotten

where he was going? If it were indeed Saturday night there would be a crowd of men in a certain dingy back room in Eliot Street. Oh yes—they might close the bar and draw the blinds, but the men in the back room would not go until long after midnight. There was time enough yet—time enough and to spare.

Ah, one could breathe more freely here around the corner, away from that surging mass. It was strange that he should be so weak—that he should tremble so. But he would have strength enough for that which was left him to do. What was this?—flashing out as a ray of light from the door of a saloon shot across the street. Silver! he picked it up eagerly. A half-dollar piece was a fortune to a man without a single penny, who had eaten nothing since morning. And yet, in spite of the faintness that oppressed him, he did not feel hungry. But he was chilled through—and now everything swayed before his eyes. He stood irresolute, fingering the coin. Then he turned and entered the saloon.

"Whiskey—yes, whiskey," he said, flinging himself down at one of the little tables in the rear of the room. Half a dozen fellows were lounging before the bar, with half-drained glasses, and they all turned and stared at him silently. "You needn't be shaking your heads at me," he muttered, defiantly. "It ain't any of your business." Then he seized the glass that was set before him and drained the contents at a single gulp. How his throat burned! but that awful sense of faintness was gone.

What were these men at the next table talking about? "What yer givin' us?" said one. "Lots o' fellers ha' been murdered an' no one the wiser. De police? Wat's de good o' de police? Dem cops ain't no flyer 'n you or me."

"Most on 'em gets jugged, just the same," was the reply.

"Does dey? Well, I know better. I can go right out now 'n' slug a feller, an' if dey don't see me dey'll never nab me. Youse can betcher sweet life on dat!"

"Some o' youse fellers think yer damned smart," observed another man with a sneer.

"Look at dat feller as was shot over in Livingstone Place," said the first speaker, unmoved by this taunt. "Dey haven't

found who did the job yet, have dey? No, nor won't," he added.

"No, no—they won't find him—oh, they won't find him!" Baretta cried, leaning forward with flushed cheeks and eyes that were strangely brilliant.

The others turned and looked at him with astonishment. "What in hell do you know about it, young feller?" asked the man whose estimate of the ability of the police was so contemptuous.

"Never mind what I know," answered Baretta. "Oh, you'll find out—to-morrow, perhaps. Yes, yes—you'll have something to talk about to-morrow. But he was my enemy. Why shouldn't a man kill his enemy? Good God!" he cried, rising to his feet, "do you understand how I have suffered?—and not a friend left in the world—not one." He took up his glass and held it high above his head. "But I'll grind them all to powder—I'll smash them like this!" Then he threw the glass upon the floor with a furious gesture, shattering it into a hundred fragments, and rushed out.

"Yes, yes—I will smash them," he was saying as he hurried along to the familiar room in Eliot Street where so many of his old acquaintances must now be gathered together. His brain seemed to be on fire, but he was no longer faint and weak. He knew what he had to do, and he would be strong enough for that. When he reached the place he paused for a minute, gazing like one in a dream upon the motley crowd as it drifted by. Some roistering young fellows were singing ribald songs, and chaffing a wretched woman who, with a shawl thrown over her head, was snivelling in all the maudlin grief of intoxication. Then a rough-looking man came along and told them with an oath to let the poor creature alone; but when they were gone and she turned to him for sympathy in her woes, he too hurried away and left her standing there. The complaining millions! oh yes, they had reason enough to complain, Baretta was saying to himself. And he had given the best years of his life to them, and without avail. He would leave them no better off than he had found them. Everything had been a failure; his own career was completely wrecked, and his great work was undone. A horrible phantasmagoria seemed to dance before his

eyes—dim figures from the past mixing with the figures surging by upon the pavement. And Maud's face was as distinct as that of the seedy fellow who, shambling along, stopped for a moment to light his pipe, hollowing his hand against the wind to protect the spattering blue flame of the match. Baretta gazed vacantly at the rusty silk hat which he wore, at the greasy and threadbare black coat which, in lieu of some warmer garment, he had buttoned tightly about him. Suddenly the man turned and saw Baretta standing there.

"Cold, ain't it?" he observed, withdrawing sociably into the doorway.

"Yes, yes—it's very cold. But it will be warm enough by-and-by."

"Next summer," said the man, with a grunt. "Whew!" he added, with a shiver, "and I didn't mind the cold once. You wouldn't think to look at me now, would you, that I once had plenty of money?"

"Money? Oh, there's enough that have money. Damn them, I say!" Baretta cried.

"What's the good of damning them? If a man's got money, he'd better stick to it. That's what I do," he said, with a laugh. "I shall stick to the ten cents in my pocket because it will buy me a breakfast in the morning. The only thing that worries me is that I sha'n't have a red cent to put in the contribution box. I'll have to take a back seat at church to-morrow."

"Oh, I can help you out," said Baretta, with a magnificent air of patronage. He thrust his hand into his pocket, and took out the change from the half-dollar which he had found. "Here's forty cents—take it."

"I ain't no beggar," the man said, angrily. But the next moment he stretched out his hand for the money. "God bless you, young man," he said, with a sob. "I was a gentleman once, and look at me now. I had money enough—but look at me. Drink, sir—drink and women."

"Women!—they're false—they throw you over at the last. Look here!" Baretta cried. "I tried to kill her—by Heaven, I did!—but I'm glad now they prevented me. It's an awful thing to kill any one—it's worse than having no money. You can't

forget it—you see them before you always—here—here!” His voice sank to a hoarse whisper.

The man whom he had befriended looked at him in a frightened way. “It’s kinder cold standing here,” he said, hastily. Then he stepped out into the street again and hurried off. “Crazy as a loon,” he muttered to himself. “But I’m forty cents in, anyway.”

Baretta did not notice his desertion. “Always—always,” he muttered. “But no—it will be over soon. They can’t find me then—not one of them.” He stood a moment in the dark recess with his hand upon the knob. Then he opened the door, and entering, closed it behind him.

CHAPTER XL

THE WAY OUT

"It ees no free country," Herr Emil said. "You are slafes and do not know it. Oh, I can tell you somethings about dat. I come here more as forty years ago, and I see greadt shanges. Vat our frendt Stefe-Luck says is true. You vill nefer haf your rights midout you fight for dem. It ees so badt as Oesterreich. Ah, '*sist schrecklich!*'"

Herr Emil was in an unusually eloquent mood. He did not rest content with this simple statement of facts. He warmed up as he proceeded, and his language became extremely vituperative. It was quite to the taste of most of his hearers. They had just received their pay, and could afford to be revolutionary. In a few days they would be wanting capital to go unpunished, at least until the end of the week: so much depends upon the point of view. Now they thumped their beer mugs with vigour when Herr Emil predicted bloodshed and anarchy. They were decidedly impressed with this new friend of Luck's, of whom such queer stories were told. His presence gave their meetings new zest. They were a little too much afraid of Ditton to be really fond of him, while Luck soon grew tiresome. But the variety of Herr Emil was infinite. His broken English was in itself a revolt against the established order which pleased them. It was almost as good as sitting in the gallery of a cheap theatre to hear him talk. And Herr Emil's childlike enjoyment of his own popularity was delightful to behold.

His absence from the city had been brief, after all. When he went away he had not intended to come back. He had an idea that his revelation of the true history of Baron Smolzow might

somehow incriminate himself. He could watch the denouement quite as well from a safe distance. Besides, there was no doubt that at his departure he had appropriated for his own use money and other valuables which did not belong to him. This might be justifiable, from a moral point of view, considering all he had done, or tried to do, in behalf of his son the Baron; but the law is inclined to be highly unphilosophical. So he contented himself at first with reading the accounts of the explosion which his hand had directed. Everything had gone well—yes, very well indeed. It was rather a pity, however, that the chief actor—for Herr Emil regarded himself as the real hero of the adventure—should have to be away from the scene; especially when the opportunities for mischief were perhaps not quite exhausted. But there was great news for Herr Emil one day. The disappearance of the Baron was something he had not counted upon; it changed the aspect of affairs. “Vare der tefle has he gone?” Herr Emil asked himself. It then occurred to him that if his son had reasons for leaving the city there was nothing to keep him from going back. He would have no awkward questions to answer about the money he had taken. And then he was really very curious to learn certain details with which even the newspapers did not acquaint him. He could construct the outlines of the story well enough, but there must be several little episodes more or less interesting, of which he knew nothing. Where had the young man gone? He did not care much, except that he wanted to be sure there was no chance of his coming back. Francis had a very bad temper; it was one of the things he had inherited from his mother; and Herr Emil was anxious that there should be no violence. Then there was Maud—had he taken her away? “That tam Maudt!” Herr Emil muttered, vindictively.

It was natural enough that he should pay no particular attention to the story about Yates. He read it with languid interest. At first he could not recall why the name was so familiar; but afterwards he remembered some of his son’s chance allusions to the man whom he seemed to regard as his especial enemy. Yes, yes—that was it. Francis had bade him take his revelations to Yates. But he had discovered excellent reasons for taking them

elsewhere. Oh, yes—his little plot had been very successful. Still it was so much better to see for one's self. He had no interest in Yates; and yet it was odd that the name should keep recurring to him. Pah! that was a commonplace tale—a man shot, and no one knew by whom. It was not until he was on his way back to Boston that the possible connection between this mysterious crime and the disappearance of Baron Smolzow was suggested to him. It came upon him like a sudden blow; then he execrated himself for being so stupid as not to have suspected before. Of course—it was all plain enough now: the web of conjecture put forth in the copy of the *Banner*, which he had in his hand, was most ingenious. "*Mon Dieu! quelle betise!*" Herr Emil muttered. Yes, yes—it was very plain. His coup had been more fertile in results than he had anticipated. He was more eager than ever to get back to Boston, and talk things over with his friend Stefe-Luck, who was a fool, to be sure, but for that reason all the more useful. And yet possibly Stefe-Luck was not altogether a fool after all. He had at least discovered a solution to one very important problem that had long vexed Herr Emil's existence. He had learned how to live well—even luxuriously—without the necessity of working or the risk of breaking the law. Ah, that Stefe-Luck was a clever man, after all: *très adroit*, to have discovered what had baffled so many people. Yes, yes, he must see Stefe-Luck again.

Thus it was that Herr Emil was enabled to play his part in the redemption of the complaining millions from the bondage under which they suffered. The only obstacle still in his way was the dislike which Ditton felt for him—Ditton, who was no doubt inspired by envy of his immense talent for oratory. The Socialist preacher was even now regarding him with knitted brows from the corner where he sat. Herr Emil's sentiments were unobjectionable, but he himself did not inspire confidence. Ditton set him down as a rascal; in which, as the reader has reason to believe, he was not without justification. But he knew his followers too well to take them into his confidence. It was well to give even a rascal plenty of rope, if one took care to be in the neighbourhood when it was time for the hanging.

"*Ja, ja!*" Herr Emil cried, waving his arms violently. "It

ees no free country at all. Ve are slaves to the men who go on piling up their tollars. Vat dey care for you, for me? De tollars—dey pile dem up, and ve take a leetle few pennies. *Mein Gott!* vare do ve arrive presently? Let me tell you a story. I go one day to see a reech man. He haf a fine house—oh, *schön, schön*—he haf everytings he veesh. And who gafe it to him? Vy, you did—you men who vork and labour; who lif in rags and haf notings to eat, so that der reech can pile up de tollars! It ees shame to you to permit it!”

“He’s right!” Luck cried at this point, rising to his feet. “What he says is true—every damn word of it. Look here! you know how those poor fellows in Lynn were locked out the other day because they wanted a raise of ten cents a day. Well, what do you suppose the owners of the mills—the men who didn’t care whether their employés starved or not—what do you suppose they get out of it? I tell you, every one of them is worth his millions—ground out of the sweat and blood—yes, the blood—of the working-man. And blood for blood, I say!”

“*Bien, bien!*” Herr Emil cried. “It ees blood we veesh.”

“Oh, you like to talk!” said Ditton, sneeringly. He rose and came down the room towards the speaker. “But I guess if it ever comes to fighting you will take precious good care to keep out of the way.”

“*Moi!* I know what it ees to fight. I haf been in battle in mein own landt—I vas fighting for your country ven you vas safe at home.”

“Well, what’s the good of fighting among ourselves?” interposed Luck. “You seem to think, Mr. Ditton, that no one’s got no right to speak but you. My friend Emeel knows what he’s talking about—see?”

“*Ja, ja, Stefe-Luck.* I know, I know.”

“And when he says we must have blood he tells the truth. We can’t do no good by setting round and gassing about it,” Luck went on. “How many working-men are there in this city? Thousands of ’em, and if every one stands out like a man, armed and ready to fight for his rights—why, do you suppose we’re afraid of the police? miserable, skulking cowards! Half of ’em would be on our side if they thought we were

going to come out on top. Blood! Why shouldn't we have blood?"

At this moment the outer door was flung open. "Blood! By Heaven, yes! But hear me first!" And Baretta, with a white and wild face, burst in upon the astonished assembly. "Hear me! you shall hear me!" he shrieked.

Instantly the whole room was in confusion. Some of the men, being new-comers, had never seen him before, and these looked at their neighbours blankly for an explanation of so strange an interruption. But the rest rose to their feet, and something like one huge menacing growl seemed to rise from their lips.

"Hear me!" Baretta repeated, shutting the door behind him and standing against it. "You shall not go except over my dead body. Fools! it is for your sakes I am here. There is danger—yes, danger, out there—and I am here to warn you."

Then it was that Ditton rose and called upon the men in ringing tones to remain seated. "I will attend to this person," Ditton said, motioning to Luck to come with him. Luck had been the first to give utterance to execrations at the sight of Baretta, the man who had been an enemy to him and a traitor to them all. But upon Herr Emil, on the other hand, this unexpected episode had exercised a curious effect. At the sound of his son's voice he had turned very pale, and after one quick glance had sat down, covering his face with one hand. If anybody had been watching him he would have observed that the hand trembled visibly.

"I'll put him out!" Luck cried, with a curse. The audience made way for the two men as they advanced. But suddenly they stopped, and Luck threw up both hands abjectly. "Don't shoot! for God's sake, don't shoot!"

For Baretta had drawn his revolver, and was now flourishing it wildly. "Stand back! I tell you you must hear me! It won't be for long," he added, with a wild laugh, "but you must hear me."

"We're through with *you*," said Ditton, facing him calmly after a scornful glance at Luck. "When a man goes back on

us once we never trust him again. There's nothing you can say that we want to hear. Now go! before you're put out."

"Go!" Even Ditton shuddered and quailed a little before the fiery glare of madness in Baretta's eyes. "Go! not till you've heard me. Oh, I know you, Ditton; I know what a friend you've been to me. Curse you! You thought you could throw me aside and trample on me, but I'll have my revenge yet. Why did you believe that man's stories? He's not my father—I am Baron Smolzow, and I defy you all to prove that I'm not. It was a conspiracy—that's what it was. Oh yes, I'm not such a fool as not to know that."

"How long are you going to listen to his gab?" asked Luck, taking good pains to keep Ditton's gaunt figure between himself and the gleaming barrel of the revolver.

"Oh, that's you, is it, Luck?" Baretta cried. "Damn you! do you suppose I'm going to let you escape? You, who went to Yates with your lies? See here—all of you—listen to me. It's justice that I want. Don't stand there muttering that I'm not Baron Smolzow. I am, I tell you! Do you forget all I've done for you? Why, I sacrificed everything to help you, and see where I am now. Not a friend in the world left—not even Maud. And I tried to kill her too. But Yates—he'll die fast enough. Yes, I say—I gave up my life for you, and how have I been rewarded? I've come now to warn you, and you only laugh at me. There's men outside—hundreds of them—waiting to come in and kill you. All the rich men in the city—they've got a cannon out there. Run! run! every one of you. All but Luck, and you, Ditton! Oh yes, he left me this," Baretta cried, flourishing the revolver again, "and I mean to kill you both!"

"O Lord!" Luck's teeth chattered and his knees knocked together as he spoke. "Look out for him! Grab him somebody! Why don't somebody grab him?"

Ditton still stood his ground, calm and fearless. He understood now what the penalty was that Fate had inflicted upon the young man—how far beyond the reach of human vengeance he was. "I don't think you quite understand what you're saying, Baretta. Come and talk it over quietly. We're not your enemies—we're your friends."

"Oh no!" Baretta said, with a cunning smile. "I know better than that. Yes, yes—the time has gone by for deceiving me. I know who my friends are—and who my enemies. And to think that I should have sacrificed my whole life for you! They're waiting for me outside there, too. The police are after me; Maud told me so. They say I killed Yates. Damn him! why shouldn't I kill him? But he was your enemy as well as mine. It's he who sent all these men. But he'll die—oh yes, he'll die! I don't care now. She threw me off—she loves him still, and she threw me off." He raised the revolver once more and patted it affectionately. "This is the best friend I've got in the world—yes, yes!"

It was at this point that Herr Emil made the mistake of taking away the hand that hid his face. The conversation was becoming extremely interesting to him, and he quite forgot the necessity of effacing himself. At the same moment Ditton moved forward a step or two, and the glances of father and son met.

"Baretta, you are mistaken," Ditton began. But the young man interrupted him with a wild cry and dashed headlong down the room, the crowd falling back in instinctive terror and giving him a free passage.

"You devil! you devil!" Baretta cried, while Herr Emil sprang up and tried to escape by leaping over the table at which he had been sitting. "You here! you! who ruined me with your vile lies. You—you!"

He aimed his revolver at his father's head and fired. At this a dozen men tried to pinion him, but he eluded them all. "Yes," he cried, wildly, "and you, Luck! and you, Ditton!"

Two more shots rang out, and the blue smoke seemed to fill the room, and somehow to stifle even the loud voices crying out in a vague tumult of alarm. But as it cleared away they all saw Baretta standing with a smile upon his face, with the muzzle of his weapon pressed close to his temple. "I'll get the better of you all!" he cried. Then there was another shot, and the dark form swayed and fell.

It was Ditton who bent over him, vainly trying to call him back to life. "Go for a doctor—call the police—some of you!"

he said, in the sharp tone of command habitual to him. But there were tears in his eyes as he gazed upon the dead face. He had only pity and regret now for the young man whose life had ended so tragically. His hopes in him had faded long ago, and yet there was a touch of sympathy in his heart. He could not forget that he once had cared for him and believed in him. There could be nothing more awful than the spectacle of a life thus wrecked that had promised so much. His mind went back to the early days of their intercourse, and he saw only his old friend and pupil lying there—that ghastly smile frozen upon his face, the dark blood oozing from his lips. To die like that! was it not a cruel expiation for his sins? “Poor fellow!” Ditton said to himself.

“He’s dead, is he?” asked Luck, coming forward with a swagger. Now that there was no danger he could afford to affect the reckless bearing of a man who holds life cheaply. “Well, he was a crazy fool and no mistake.”

“The less *you* say, Luck, the better,” Ditton retorted.

“So! so!” interrupted the voice of Herr Emil, who had approached unobserved. He felt the contempt in Ditton’s face when the preacher looked up at him for a moment, but he chose to ignore it. “*Mein Gott!* he made a fool of himself.” Then he saw the revolver lying in his son’s nerveless grasp, and, stooping down, took it from him. “So!” Herr Emil said once more, rubbing it with his sleeve. “It ees mine.”

CHAPTER XLI

MRS. CADWALLADER'S PROPHECY

"OH, I made him promise to come, and I am sure he will not forget." Mrs. Cadwallader laughed and glanced at Mildred, who was talking to Mr. Cadwallader. She was sure that Mildred coloured a little, although she pretended not to hear. "It's the first time he has been anywhere, but you know I am an old friend."

"Of course," Daisy said, laughing, too; "we know he would do anything for you."

"Only for me? They say that we married women are dangerous, but that's a mistake. But he will stay and dine with us, and then—"

"Every one is so pleased, to be sure," interrupted Daisy, hastily. "It ought to be very flattering to Philip—to Mr. Yates—to find himself so popular."

Mrs. Cadwallader was an observant person, and she had no difficulty in deciding that Daisy was blushing now. How stupid she was not to have suspected the truth before! she said to herself. It added an emotional complication to the situation which was immensely interesting. She had supposed that the quarrel between Philip and Mildred would now be made up. It was the way everything would end in a novel, and it would be most unnatural if the result were otherwise in real life. She never had understood just what the cause of their quarrel had been. Philip was a dreadfully nice fellow, and they were very good friends; but he had never chosen to confide in her; he was unsympathetic in some respects, as all men are apt to be. She knew that he had suffered keenly; he had not succeeded

in concealing that fact from her. As to Mildred's feelings she was less sure. Mildred was a self-contained girl; not like Daisy, who had moments of expansive confidence, although she, too, had kept one secret pretty well. Mrs. Cadwallader was very fond of Daisy, but perhaps she was a little disappointed, none the less, at the turn affairs were taking. Mildred was the prettier, to her mind, and she had greater distinction of manner, which was something on which a man choosing a wife ought to lay stress. And then it was so aggravating to be cheated out of the proper ending to the romance! not at all like a novel in any way.

"Yes, indeed—we all like him," Mrs. Cadwallader said, replying to Daisy's remark. "Oh, he will be made quite a hero of; we shall hardly get a chance to speak to him. That's why I made him promise to stay to dinner. I dare say," she added, "that things will be the same now"—she dropped her voice to a whisper—"as they were once."

It was rather a vague speech, but Daisy understood it. "Oh yes," she said, rather tremulously, "it was all so—so absurd."

"What are you two conspirators whispering about?" Mr. Cadwallader asked, coming up to the table where his wife was sitting. "Come, now, pour a cup of tea for Miss Lawrence. I want to take her off in a corner and monopolize her society while I have a chance."

"Oh, Mildred, Mildred!" Mrs. Cadwallader sighed. "Do you hear my husband's shameless confession?"

"It's a modest confession, anyway," said Mr. Cadwallader. "It implies a fitting sense of my lack of ability to make myself entertaining."

"Have you really found that out?" And having made this malicious remark, Mrs. Cadwallader looked away to greet two new arrivals. "Ah, Mrs. Stanwood—so kind of you to come. And Miss Linley—why didn't you bring Annie with you?" And after that there was, indeed, no chance to monopolize anybody's society. It was Mrs. Cadwallader's last afternoon for the season, and all her friends were out in force.

Philip felt the exhilarating influence of the warmth and brightness of this clear spring day as he drove from his rooms

in Livingstone Place to Mrs. Cadwallader's charming apartments. Even in March there is warmth and brightness sometimes. Mrs. Cadwallader had made him promise to come, as she had told Daisy; otherwise he might have been inclined to stay away. He was conscious of a curious feeling of shyness—a feeling which was absurd even when one had been cut off from the world so long. It was not because he dreaded meeting Mildred—that was one of the follies which had passed away during his long illness; upon this point he was very positive. No, they must meet as formal acquaintances; it was the only solution of the difficulty; it was the only way of teaching the world to forget that they had ever been more than that. Ah yes—one's whole point of view alters so greatly after weeks of pain and imprisonment. And Mildred had not even cared enough to send him a single message of sympathy! Even when they said he was dying her heart was not touched, although once she had loved him. Pooh! what did women know about love? he said to himself, bitterly. If she had ever cared for him at all she would at least have sent him a single message then. Even Daisy had come to ask after him. It will be seen that his mother had given him no hint of the episode which had caused Mildred so much humiliation. She would not have told him a falsehood, of course, if he had asked any questions; but she carried out this tacit deception without scruple. She felt that she would be very glad to have her son forget Miss Lawrence altogether. He had never been the same man since that unfortunate love affair. She regarded it as quite providential, on the whole, that she had been there to intercept the note and the flowers, so eager are we fools of Nature to interfere with the decrees of Fate. Thus Mildred's name was never mentioned between them. Why, indeed, should it be, since Philip had vanished so completely the folly of loving her?

And yet it certainly was a little hard to think that his interference in her behalf had nearly cost him his life, and that she was not grateful enough to make a single friendly overture in acknowledgment. Of course he had expected nothing; he had made Daisy promise not to tell Mildred what he had done. But he was somehow sure that Mildred must know. The fact that Ba-

retta had fired the shot was no longer any mystery to the world; the clew had been revealed by Philip's iteration of his name, by a hundred other utterances of his delirium, and the sensational ending of Baretta's life had completed the chain of evidence. It was comparatively easy for any one, knowing a part of the story, to surmise the rest. There was much, of course, that Philip himself did not understand—much that was buried in the grave of the strange and miserable young man who was perhaps not unworthy of pity as well as rebuke. During the days of his convalescence, however, this or that hint came to him. Daisy had written a long letter in which she told poor Maud's story, and how at the last she had wished to save the man she loved. "I shall try to be a true friend to her," Daisy had said. A true friend! Ah yes, Daisy was that always; not like other women, who were hard and unforgiving even in the shadow of death. But he had succeeded in the task he undertook, and if success had cost him bitter suffering, what did it matter, after all? There was something which the wretched newspapers did not know, at all events, and never should know. It is silence that one finds in the grave; and Baretta was dead. Poor devil!—Philip was conscious of a pang of pity as he reflected upon that tragic episode, in spite of the fact that death by Baretta's hands had nearly been his portion, too.

But such a day as this was no time for gloomy thoughts. Philip leaned back in the carriage and drank in the soft air luxuriously. He was profoundly grateful for life—the life that had once seemed to him so empty and dreary. There was, perhaps, no such thing as happiness in this world. One, however, could be comfortable and contented. To feel the blood pulsing through one's veins after weeks of pain and languor gave one the keenest pleasure. He was not quite himself yet, to be sure; his wound had been dangerous enough to make recovery slow. Even now it might be months before all his old strength came back to him. He was going away in a few days; his doctor had recommended a sea-voyage, and he had decided to take one of the Norddeutscher Lloyd steamships to Genoa, and when the warmer weather came move slowly northward. He would spend the first part of his holiday in the Riviera; then

perhaps he would go to Homburg, and in August to Scotland. Surely his health would be fully restored by that time, and Lord Shetland had promised him some good shooting if he would come. It would be the best thing, in any case, to get away from all the old associations; there was little satisfaction in renewing them now. Let it be as if, indeed, his life had been taken from him by Baretta's hand. Oh yes! across the wide Atlantic one could forget so easily. Perhaps he was a fool to go to Mrs. Cadwallader's this afternoon. It would be a bore if people talked to him about the episode which he was so anxious to blot out altogether. But he could not very well refuse when Mrs. Cadwallader had made such a point of it. And, after all, it was worth while to be able to go anywhere. Why should he worry over what people might say or think?—what did he care?

There were a good many visitors in the dainty rooms which all artistic Boston raved over, and Philip, whose face was haggard despite the slight glow which the air had brought to his cheeks, succeeded in entering unobserved except by one or two who knew him and who came up to shake hands with him. But after that it was of course impossible that he should escape the attentions from which he shrank. People might not know exactly what Baretta's motive had been, but the whisper had gone forth that Philip had incurred his vengeance by interfering to save some one from scandal, that he had even tried to save Baretta himself, although that well-meant effort had failed so signally. There was a mystery, anyway, and that was enough to make the central figure in it a temporary object of pursuit by lion hunters. It was said that Miss Lawrence was in some way connected with the episode; no one, however, could tell exactly how. Of course that report of her engagement to the dreadful Baron was false. But where there was so much smoke there must be some fire. And Mr. Yates—he had been engaged to her once, and the affair had been broken off, no one knew why. Oh, there was a good deal of a mystery here, if one could only find out what it was! Those who did not like Philip intimated that a low feeling of jealousy had prompted him to expose the Baron, and that he was the real author of the first

startling story in the *Mail*. The world in general, however, would not accept this theory; it was in the mind for a little hero worship, and it defended the sanctity of its idol. They call it a censorious world, but it is capable of the most genial optimism when it is in the mood. And so Mrs. Cadwallader's guests made much of Philip. His hostess bade him sit by her. "I intend to treat you as a distinguished invalid," she said.

"Ah, but I am neither," replied Philip. He was very glad, however, to obey her injunction. "It makes a man feel like a fool to have to coddle himself all the time."

"We are only too glad to have you with us again on any terms, Philip. Has your mother gone back to Lexington? I hoped she would come with you this afternoon."

"You're very kind—but she went yesterday. I shall go out to-morrow and stay until I sail. I'm going to take a run across, you know."

"Oh, we shall see you there. We go this year earlier than usual—in May. I fancy that Mr. Cadwallader will want to stay at Trouville for a month or two. Why can't you come there?"

"I can—I will, since you ask me. Would you mind giving me another cup of tea? How are you, Allen? I suppose you, too, will soon be taking flight with the rest of us."

"Ah, I have some important literary work on hand," Mr. Allen said, patronizingly. "Something that I can't do in this country. Delighted to see you out again, Yates, I'm sure. It was a narrow squeak. I told them all along that the fellow was no baron at all. Wasn't it immensely clever of me, Mrs. Cadwallader, to suspect it from the first?"

"And how clever, too, to conceal your suspicions so well!" Mrs. Cadwallader said. "Would you mind taking this to Miss Linley?"

Mr. Allen walked away, not quite sure whether Mrs. Cadwallader had meant to be sarcastic or not. He thought sarcasm was a nasty trick, especially in a woman. Of course, if one had exceptional powers in that way, it was different. "You'd hardly know Yates, would you?" he said to Miss Linley. "It was a beastly thing to do; just what one might have expected from a cad like that."

"Oh, the Baron!" said Miss Linley, with a shrug of her intellectually angular shoulders. "Don't speak about the horrid creature! I can never forgive myself for permitting mamma to ask him to Cambridge. In our parlours, you know—and he had never even heard of Plato. Fancy that! I disliked him from the first. I saw that he wasn't really intellectual. How is your book getting on, Mr. Allen? I enjoyed your article in the last *Northern Review* so much. I don't care what they say—women *are* silly; they don't care for intellect in the least. And the men are just as bad—some of them."

"Oh, I'm so glad you agree with me. Of course, I've been attacked bitterly," Mr. Allen said, with conscious pride, "but one must expect that. I flatter myself I've given them something to think about. And the book? Oh, that is progressing. I run over to London in a few weeks to gather more material. It will create a sensation when it is published. I let Professor Bagshaw read the manuscript of the first two chapters, and he says it will be a brilliant piece of work. Isn't that Pinkerton coming in? What a conceited fellow he is! I hate conceit."

"So do I," said Miss Linley. Nevertheless, she was very glad to have Mr. Pinkerton come over and talk to her presently. He was a mine of information on those slighter social topics which even she, in all her might of intellect, did not despise. He did not always do his powers full justice in the paragraphs which he wrote for the society papers. Sometimes it was unfortunate to know too much about people whom you did not want to attack from a quarter that would disclose the identity of their assailant. But in conversation one could say so much and not be held to account for it.

"Yates seems to be quite the hero of the hour," Mr. Pinkerton said, with a sneer. "There was something very queer about that whole affair, but then—" And he shook his head mysteriously.

"Oh, really!" said Miss Linley, leaning forward with a look of expectation. "Tell me all about it."

"I dare say you wouldn't care to hear all."

"Ah, I supposed there was something beneath the surface,"

she said, calmly. "You can't trust any one. I knew he was an adventurer."

"Who—Yates?" asked Mr. Pinkerton, with a look of surprise.

"The Baron, of course; how can you be so stupid? And I am so sorry mamma asked him to Cambridge."

"Ah, the Baron—certainly; I wasn't thinking of him when I spoke. Although, of course, there was his engagement to Miss Lawrence—"

"I thought that was denied."

"Oh yes—it was denied," Mr. Pinkerton said, with a smile.

"What amazes me, however, is that she should be willing to meet Yates again."

"What do you mean?"

Mr. Pinkerton shook his head mysteriously. "Oh, I can't tell you that, Miss Linley—really, I can't. But you remember about their broken engagement—there was a very queer connection between that and the shooting business which people seem to be making such a fuss over just now. Oh, very queer! Of course, Yates is a good enough sort of fellow, but some women would find it hard to overlook those little irregularities—I don't say it's any crime to be a little the worse for wine, or to—to indulge in other things—"

"You mean like keeping a mistress?" said Miss Linley, with a coolness that rather dazed him. "Oh, I had heard of that—at least, I gathered from some remarks of Miss Tredwell's about a certain Maud—they weren't intended for my ears, I assure you, but Miss Lawrence looked distressed, and of course one couldn't help suspecting—"

"Maud! Oh, was that the name?" Mr. Pinkerton asked, blandly. He had not expected to strike this trail of information, but instinct led him to follow it up. There was little, however, that Miss Linley could tell him. Indeed, she wasn't quite sure whether it was Mr. Yates or that dreadful Baron who had been acquainted with a young woman whose character was not unimpeachable. "Maud! it's an improper sort of name, don't you think?" Miss Linley said.

But Philip's interview with Mildred has been of the briefest,

and even if Mr. Pinkerton's suspicions had been justified there would have been nothing in it to stimulate curiosity. Mildred, too, had come to the conclusion that the past had better be ignored. She had once told him that she preferred they should be strangers to each other, but she was by no means sure just now that her attitude had been either wise or right. At all events, she felt that she could maintain it no longer. Philip had done so much for her, although she had treated him so badly. He was right in thinking that she knew something of the truth. Daisy had kept her promise in the face of every temptation to break it. But Baretta's own wild outburst in her presence, his rage against a suspected rival, had been a sufficient enlightenment. Oh yes—it was all her fault! This was what she told herself when she realized how unjust she had been. It was because Philip had tried to save her from the consequences of her own folly that he had nearly lost his life. She had no means of knowing what he had done, but her surmises, fed by vague hints, took the shape of certainty in her mind. She was very grateful to him, very severe in her judgment of herself. And he would think that she was ungrateful—that she had not cared enough even to send him a single friendly message. So when she went up to him and he rose to shake hands with her, she felt confused and stupid. "I am glad you are better," she said, with trembling lips.

"Thank you," he answered, gravely.

She looked at him a moment with piteous eyes, and then turned away. How cold and formal her words were! and yet her heart was full of tender sympathy. And he would never understand that at all. Surely her punishment was more than she could bear. She sat down in one of the cushioned window-seats, where she was half hidden behind the draperies, and gazed drearily into the street below. Daisy could go and talk to him freely—Daisy, who she was sure cared for him more than she would acknowledge, and whom he might well learn to love out of very gratitude. She had no cause to blame him for that. Why should she expect him to go on loving her? She saw Philip and Daisy together presently, and a bitter sense of loneliness invaded her heart. Men consoled themselves so easily,

she said to herself. Why should she stay any longer, and endure this torture? But before she could go Daisy intercepted her.

"Of course you're not going," Daisy said. "Mrs. Cadwalader asked you especially to stay to dinner—she would be greatly offended."

"She will excuse me. I—I have a headache."

"It isn't very kind to Philip. You have hardly spoken to him. And—and I think you might forgive him—now."

"Daisy, I will not permit you to say such things!" Mildred cried, angrily. "I don't think," she added, "that it is a matter of great consequence to—any one."

"Oh, but I told him how anxious you were—how you called to ask after him. You see," Daisy went on, hastily, "his mother mentioned it to me, and I knew—"

"I wish you would be so good as not to interfere in my affairs."

She turned away, but her friend laid a detaining hand upon her arm. "You can be just as horrid as you choose, Mildred, for I know you don't mean it. Do you suppose I can't understand how she treated you? But I wouldn't let him think you were so heartless as not to care."

"You're a very strange girl," was Mildred's reply. "There—I will stay—just to please you. But you must put all those notions out of your head. Everything—is quite over—between—" She paused—perhaps it was a sob that she was choking back—then added, with a faint smile, "You ought to know who it is that—that he cares for."

"What nonsense are you talking now?" asked Daisy, with a blush. "I never saw a girl so obstinate as you are. But you will learn the truth—by-and-by."

"By-and-by?" Mildred repeated, vaguely. She gave a hasty glance about the room. "Here is Mr. Allen coming—I don't want to talk with him now. Oh yes, I will stay. We shall be very good friends—I mean, Philip and I. But you mustn't imagine that we shall be more than that. Oh yes," she added, smiling again, "so many things may happen—by-and-by."

So it was a pleasant enough little party after all, although

Mildred was placed at quite a distance from Philip when they sat down at the dinner-table, and indeed said very little all the evening. It was a consolation, she felt, to know that Philip could no longer fancy that she was altogether heartless, that she had been unable to forgive him even when she thought he was dying. But of course he would realize how foolish it was to think that they could ever be more than friends.

Perhaps she would have been less consoled had she overheard a remark which Mrs. Cadwallader made to her husband after her guests had gone. "I think it will be Daisy, after all," Mrs. Cadwallader said.

"Daisy! what do mean by that?" he asked. "Is it some mystery about Miss Tredwell? I must ask her to sit to me. I'd like to paint that red hair of hers."

"Oh, you men are so stupid!" his wife replied, with a laugh. "Yes, every one of you!" And no doubt this was all the answer he deserved.

THE END

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